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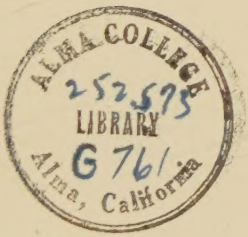
THE HOLY HOUR

A Series of Conferences

BY

REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM



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CONFERENCES FOR THE DEVOTION OF THE HOLY HOUR

Sunday Within the Octave of Christmas

Introductory

"And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The now widespread practice of the "Holy Hour" is one of the "thoughts," so to say, "revealed out of many hearts." Like the kindred devotions of the Sacred Heart, and the Apostleship of Prayer, it owes its origin to a revelation made to blessed Margaret Mary; and its rapid spread throughout the Church to the zeal of the good Fathers of the Society of Jesus. The three forms of piety are now mostly linked together, in the combined prayers that make up the devotions of the First Fridays, and which are mostly gone through in presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

The practise of the "Holy Hour," whether made during Exposition or not, is mainly intended to keep us closely in touch with our Lord, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when, "Being in agony, He prayed the longer." Crushed under the weight of the guilt of our race, His Sacred Heart wrung with anguish at the sight of men's ingratitude, and His fast approaching sufferings, He longs for the sympathy and companionship of His followers. "Stay ye here and watch with Me," was His appeal to them, as it is to us to-day, in the call of the "Holy Hour."

Be it not ours, by our stand-off attitude, to merit the reproach addressed to the somnolent disciples, "Could you not watch one hour with Me?"

Too often, alas! our Lord, forsaken in the Tabernacle, as in the Garden of Olives during His agony, can plaintively say: "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none" (Ps. lxviii, 21). He almost re-echoed these words when bidding the holy nun, blessed Margaret, to join Him in the prayer He offered to His divine Father in agony. "Thus," He said, "you will share with Me, and, in a manner, soothe the bitter grief I suffered when my disciples abandoned Me."

To engage in the devotion of the Holy Hour, is, therefore, an appeal straight from the Heart of our Lord. Our prayer thus gets steeped in the chalice of His Passion. For the prayer of Gethsemane was no transient act. It is still embedded in the eucharistic Sacrifice.

In the Garden of Olives the mystic wheat was crushed and ground into the victim for the offering of the morrow; so during the "Holy Hour," by earnest prayer with Christ, are our hearts prepared for union with our eucharistic Lord, both in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in holy Communion. This will be the trend of our thoughts, and the theme of our short instructions, during the devotion of the "Holy Hour" in the year we are entering.

I. To be near our Lord, the "Holy Hour" is usually spent, as I said, grouped around the Tabernacle, His eucharistic home on earth. For in it His life, death, and Passion are renewed and continued. We find Him there as in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the olive garden. Surely, an hour spent once a week in our Lord's bodily presence will be found a most powerful aid in lifting the heart upwards to the life of the spirit, and thus tracing the Divine

likeness within us. Where can the great duty of adoration, thanksgiving, and petition be better discharged; or the great work of atonement for our own and others' sins, of sympathy and fellowship with our Lord, and of prayer for the needs of self and holy Church, be more effectually carried out than in the immediate presence of the divine Master, who has chosen to lead a life of perpetual abasement in our midst. Behind the "screen of the lattice" of the lowly elements He veils His majesty, to make approach and intercourse easy, intimate, and inviting.

In the great apocalyptic vision of the Mass, St. John beheld the "Lamb on the altar, standing, as it were, slain." Such is our Lord's actual state amongst us in the holy Eucharist. Holy Mass repeats symbolically not merely the sacrificial meal of the Last Supper, but His Passion and death. Nor does His eucharistic presence fade away with the Mass. Christ abides and shuts Himself up in the Tabernacle, as in a garden enclosed, watching and pleading, whilst we, His followers, sleep "afar off." Surely, in the holy atmosphere which His presence creates, we can spare one hour at least in the week, to keep Him company. This will be to us a holy hour indeed.

II. But how shall we spend it? As there are no set forms of prayer, or practises, in the rules of the "Holy Hour," we cannot, it seems to me, spend it better than by dwelling, in a brief address, on some point or phase, of our Lord's eucharistic life, as revealed to us in its double aspect of Sacrifice and Sacrament; and applying the thoughts and impressions it suggests to the deepening and strengthening of the divine life within us.

After all, the holy Eucharist, in Mass and Communion, is the great central fire that keeps alive the spiritual life. All devotions emanate from and radiate around it. It is the pulse of the Church.

The life of the spirit grows when it is present, cools in its absence. Nowadays, especially, when there is such license in religious thought and action, the hearing of Mass and going to holy Communion are the very test and touchstone of vital Catholicism. They are the index of people's spiritual temperature. The divine fire waxes and wanes with the treatment accorded to the holy Eucharist. The cult of the Eucharist in Mass and Communion is both the oldest and newest form of devotion. It was the solace of the infant Church in the Cenacle, and of the martyred Church in the Catacombs; just as it is of the Church militant to-day. There is this difference, however, that it is no longer "the secret" hidden from the unbeliever and the uninitiated. On the contrary, it is a constant subject of debate in book, press, and congress. Its every phase and mystery are proclaimed from the house-tops. Indeed, we may say, this is the age of the Eucharist. Even to our avowed enemies, the Mass, *e. g.*, is no longer the senseless mummery and gross superstition of former times, but rather, in its growth and ritual, an interesting branch of study. Thus, whilst outside the Church, the beauty of the eucharistic Liturgy, happily, inspires reverence and respect; inside all Jansenistic tendencies to restrictions on its use have been stamped out.

But to us, dear brethren, holy Mass and Communion are no mere hollow rites, no dead memorials of a dead past, but the fuel of the divine life; nay, divine life itself, "Emmanuel," "God with us." The holy Eucharist has this peculiarity: it is like the pillar in Exodus (Chap. xiv, 19), a bright light to the children of God; a dark, dense cloud to their enemies. What to us is the Paschal Lamb, the new manna of Christ's Body and Blood, clear to faith, is but to them what is revealed only to sense. Though a sea of wonders not to be fathomed by us, creatures of a day; yet, we can

ever advance in knowledge and love of it by study and prayer. Like the blind and disheartened disciples on the way to Emmaus, we can most surely recognize, know and appreciate our eucharistic Lord in "the breaking of bread." It is thus we mainly come to be "His people, and He our God."

A short address, therefore, each week, bearing on some of the highways and byways of Mass and Communion, will help us to spend the "Holy Hour" helpfully and fruitfully.

To know our Lord well is to know Him in His eucharistic life. To know a good Catholic is to know one who hears holy Mass and receives holy Communion regularly, intelligently and devoutly. Even one tiny spark of thought, struck as by flint and steel, may help to kindle the fire of devotion and prompt to some practical resolutions for our guidance during each week.

The public practise of the "Holy Hour" not being confined to any fixed day nor hour, and as, owing to the stress and strain of worldly occupations, our meetings may, perchance, be only possible on Sundays, our addresses, in consequence, will be framed in such a way as to be linked to some gospel text that we have read at the Sunday Mass. The choicest sayings of our Lord, and the main incidents of His life, are enshrined in the gospels; and, therefore, offer an apt prelude or introduction to the intimate communion He grants our souls during the prayer of the "Holy Hour."

Another word, and I have done. A new year is beginning. Can anything help us to spend it better than by making up our minds to devote at least one unbroken hour a week to the study of God's most wonderful work, the Eucharist? Self, the world, our families, our business, and our pleasures absorb most of our time. Is it unreasonable to spare a brief portion of it to keeping guard round the Tabernacle? Let it not be to us that He will say reproachfully,

"Couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?" Rather let us resolve:

First.—To attend regularly during the coming year the devotion of the "Holy Hour."

Second.—To make a deeper and more prayerful study of our Lord's eucharistic life. What do we know of the wonders enshrined in holy Mass and holy Communion?

Third.—To apply the knowledge thus gained to the building of God's Tabernacle within us, wherein He may find it His delight to dwell.

Circumcision

The Word Sacrifice

"After eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus."—Gospel of day.

The first shedding of the Precious Blood took place in the sacrificial rite of Circumcision. The bleatings of the "Lamb of God," slain for sin, were heard for the first time to-day. Though blood no longer flows on our altars in the daily sacrifice, yet He, around whom we cluster in fervent prayer during the "Holy Hour," is amongst us by virtue of a sacrificial act. For our Lord issues into Eucharistic life in and through the clean, bloodless rite of holy Mass—the one sole lawful Sacrifice, that has replaced all others and which sums up and expresses all that was worthy, or of good repute, either in the degenerate rites of paganism or in the divinely appointed sacrifices of the law of Moses.

The one great Sacrifice of the Cross, by which Christ adequately atoned for the sins of the world, persists in the pure, spotless, and bloodless Sacrifice of the Mass, applying to men's ever recurring and various needs the fruits reaped and conquests won on Calvary; and thereby rendering the "Name of God greatest amongst the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same" (Mal. i, 2). The tree of the Cross, the tree of life, is still budding; and the fountains it struck from the rock and sweetened are still flowing in the Mass. To help you to value this treasure, I propose to state briefly what is meant by and summed up in the word sacrifice, of which the Mass is the highest form.

I. Sacrifice is a word that meets us at every turn in life. Figuratively speaking, it means self-surrender, the giving to, or doing for another, something that costs. Some of us, perhaps, meet here to-day for the devotion of the Holy Hour at the cost of time, pleasure, or convenience, that in this sense we gladly offer in sacrifice to almighty God. Devoting one's services, one's health, or wealth, or even life itself, to others is thus often termed sacrifice. Sacrifice is, therefore, the gift of something we can call our own in self-surrender. But sacrificial givings, or gifts, are nearly always used in connection with religion. The very word sacrifice means doing a sacred or holy thing; *i. e.,* giving or offering self, or things we call our own, to God. They are all His already, it is true; but, like a father, He gladly takes, as a mark of love and gratitude, what, strictly speaking, is not ours, but His own. Men have always, therefore, instinctively offered gifts to their God. The offering of prayer and praise, either by heart or voice, to God, is but an offering of His own gifts of mind, affection, and speech to the Giver. To do so, out of a motive of love and gratitude and by way of homage and thanks, is inward sacrifice, the very keynote and essence of all true personal religion. It is this that gives life and value to all outward forms and must accompany even the offering on our part of such a priceless treasure as the Sacrifice of the holy Mass.

But man is not a spirit, nor an isolated unit. He is body and soul and one of a group. He is gregarious and social, and God has given him sway over this earth and all in it; hence, he feels drawn and bound to offer in return public, outward, and joint worship, the main rite of which was always deemed to be that of sacrifice; *i. e.,* the united offering, by a duly elected official, called a priest, of some outward gift. From the earliest times men offered to Deity

such things as fruit, wine, meal or animals; and these offerings, with their attendant rites, constituted acts of sacrifice. In order to show that these gifts were not granted in a selfish spirit, but rather as a proof that God had exclusive rights over man and his possessions, the things thus offered were consumed or put out of use. The wine was poured out, the incense burned, the meal scattered, the animals slain, the bread eaten, and so forth.

Hence the word sacrifice, in the strict technical sense, may be defined as "the setting aside and offering to God alone of some outward gift, afterwards destroyed or put out of human use by a lawful minister, in recognition of God's supreme dominion over all things. It is, therefore, the chief form of public worship."

II. It stands to reason that there should be one great central act of divine worship that can be offered to God alone; and which it were idolatry to offer to a creature. This is the supreme act of homage, called Sacrifice, reserved to the Divinity. Other forms of worship may be offered both to the Creator and the creature; but not this. We may and do pray to creatures, honor them, thank them, and do them reverence; but we cannot sacrifice to them without sin.

Thus, we revere and pray to our Lady, the angels, and the saints; but it would be a crime to say Mass to them. Mass is reserved to God alone, because it is a sacrifice. We say Mass in honor of our Lady and the saints, but to God alone we offer it. History shows how even the pagans made gods of their kings and heroes and deified the powers of Nature before daring to sacrifice to them. The instinct to worship God by sacrifice is so ancient and widespread as to seem to be inherent in our nature, or rather, to come down from some primitive revelation. Hence, in the infancy of the race, we find God accepting the sacrifice of Abel and,

later, the sacrifices of Noah, Melchisedec and Abraham. So universal was the instinct of worship by sacrifice amongst all nations that the rite was offered everywhere. It was practiced both in cultured Greece and in imperial Rome as well as amongst the wild and savage tribes that hovered on their borders.

The perversion of this supreme act of worship, in being offered to idols and false gods, no more tells against its inherent worth than do ignorance and vice against the inherent grandeur of the great powers of intelligence and free will. Food, drink and medicine may be poisoned; air and water corrupted; and, in like manner, the great rite of Sacrifice, witnessing so impressively to the supreme dominion of God over His creatures, may be made the very groundwork of devil-worship. The best gifts of God may be perverted. Do not men who ought to and do know better still sacrifice, in a manner, to lust and mammon? Note well that the rite of sacrifice has neither perished nor ceased with that of the Cross. In a pure and bloodless way, it still continues. All other forms of legal sacrifice, however, have been abolished, or rather, have found their fulfilment, completion, explanation and full perfection in the Mass. "I will not receive a gift," *i. e.,* a sacrificial offering, says God, speaking of His own divinely appointed Sacrifices, "I will not receive a gift from your hands, . . . for from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and *in every place,* there is a *Sacrifice,* and there is offered to My name, a clean oblation" (Mal. i, 11). Happily, the one pure holy Sacrifice that we daily offer to the one true God is thus beyond the reach of human perversity. Through whatsoever hands it passes, or under whatsoever surroundings, the Mass is said, be it under the lofty dome of a cathedral, or under the lowly roof of a wayside chapel; in a sordid prison, or in a gorgeous

palace, the Mass can be neither soiled nor spoiled. Gold rusts not, neither does the Mass. The Sacrifice of the Cross, carried through by the agency of wicked Jews and Gentiles, was not thereby less acceptable to God; or less beneficial to men. The same holds true of its continued and perpetual renewal in holy Mass.

III. What a priceless inheritance, then, is ours in holy Mass! What a noble privilege, to be able to asist at, and, by holy Communion, even to share in the one sole Sacrifice, by which adequate worship is offered to the Being, "Who made heaven and earth."

The Athenians raised an altar to the unknown God, whom St. Paul preached, and around Whom we are privileged to cluster in holy prayer to-day. He comes to our altars in holy Mass, and stays with us in the Blessed Sacrament. He visits us in a state of Sacrifice, and still remains "the Lamb, as it were, slain," to be our food.

Have we then nothing to offer Him? Shall we kneel before Him with empty hands and still emptier hearts? No! Rather, in obedience to the great law of Sacrifice, we too shall offer our gifts at His holy altar. The great public Sacrifice of the Church is perfect; and in essentials, unchangeable; but it is not so with the personal and inward gifts that God asks of us and has a right to get. When we assist at holy Mass, we jointly offer it with the priest; but this offering of ours should come from a heart free from rancor, ill will, and carnal dross of any kind. All powers of the soul unite in the supreme act of worship, called the Mass. These powers are gifts of God, too often, alas! spoiled, nay, perverted by us—gifts, not unfrequently used, in sacrificing to the idols and false gods of the day. Let us bring them back captive to God. Sacrifice is the surrender of what we call our own, to another; but in relation to God, there is no mine or thine, all is

His. If He asks the heart—the group of powers that we have spoiled by sin, it is but to return that heart to us, healed and sanctified. Self-surrender to God is thus a holy form of self-aggrandisement. He rejected the sacrifices of the old law; but never, "the humble and contrite heart." How much less then, when joined to the clean and spotless outward Sacrifice of the new law, that ever finds favor in His sight. Our hearts must go out and up to God in the Mass.

But the Mass is a memorial of the Passion, reminding us that Sacrifice is the measure and touchstone of love. Mass is a great poem in action. It is a sacred drama, the burden of which, so to say, is, "He loved me and delivered Himself for me." Let us return this love by some little daily acts of self-sacrifice; and resolve, *e. g.*:

(1) To make, if possible, the sacrifice needful to hear daily Mass. Sacrifice is no longer limited to one spot, or time, but ascends daily, as an odor of sweetness, "in every place." To assist at it, indeed, is a privilege rather than a sacrifice.

(2) Next, let us bend to the great law of sacrifice, facing us in our daily lives. This is another way of saying that we must take up our cross daily, and follow our Lord.

(3) Our Lord to-day willingly submitted to the cruel law of Circumcision, to which He was not bound. Why should we repine, or rather, why should we not gladly sacrifice our liberty, in obeying the laws; and follow the counsels, to which by duty, or promise, we are bound? Remember that self-sacrifice is the measure of our love of God and the standard of our progress in the spiritual life.

First Sunday After Epiphany

The Word Sacrifice—Continued

"He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them."—Gospel of day.

Two suggestive texts bearing on the work "Sacrifice" are drawn from Scripture for our instruction in the Mass of to-day. St. Paul, in the epistle, tells us "To present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, our reasonable service"; and in the Gospel we are told, that our Lord went down with His parents to Nazareth and "was subject to them." Thus, the service of God, by duty to Him in life-long self-surrender of body and soul; and the service of man, by *obedience* to parents, superiors or others, representing God, are both states of sacrifice. We live, therefore, in an atmosphere of sacrifice. Do what we may, we cannot escape either the word or the reality it stands for. We worship God publicly, by offering up the solemn action and office of holy Mass, the standing Sacrifice of the Church; and are, moreover, called upon to worship Him privately and personally, by a life of obedience, *i. e.*, sacrifice or duty. Our Lord did so before consummating the Sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary. Nay, He does so still. The recluse of Nazareth, who was subject to Joseph and Mary, is to-day the recluse of the Tabernacle. He is there, in a state of perpetual obedience, or sacrifice, subject to the control of His priests. His life therein is, to us, an undying object-lesson of love and duty.

I. But we are dealing here with sacrifice in the strict technical sense of the term. We have seen that men ever felt drawn, by duty

and need, to give expression of their conviction of God's supreme dominion, and their own dependence thereon, by a special act of worship, named Sacrifice, and reserved to Him alone. This act took the form of offerings; but not every offering to God is Sacrifice. The thing or creature offered had to become a victim, *i. e.*, it had to be changed or destroyed. Hence the death of the victim, or some change of state, equivalent to death, was always deemed a necessary element of this rite. The creatures offered in sacrifice were usually either those that share life with man, such as animals, or those that contributed to his support, such as fruit, oil, wine or meal. Needless to enumerate the various kinds of sacrifice. They all, in some way or other, symbolized the one great Sacrifice of the Cross and its continuation in the Mass. What were called the bloody sacrifices, typified Christ's Sacrifice, as enacted on Calvary; those that were bloodless, represented it, as perpetuated in the form of the Mass. All forms of sacrifice must disappear before the Mass. It is the sole legitimate form of sacrificial rite, destined to survive and replace all others. Bloody sacrifices ceased at Calvary.

In a sinless state, sacrifice would have doubtless assumed a very simple form, fitted, and meant only, to give outward expression to men's inward feelings of love and gratitude, such as the offerings, that good and grateful children make to their parents; but sin introduced a new element, the consciousness of guilt, and the consequent need of expiation or atonement. Hence, sin offerings, by way of satisfaction for guilt, overshadowed all others. Bloody rites, nay, even human sacrifices, grew common, in order to appease offended Deity. Men rightly felt that the "wages of sin is death"; and therefore chose either their fellow men, or other creatures, by way of substitution for themselves. The victim thus chosen, stood for guilty man. Man as much as said, I offer to God, the Lord of life,

who has supreme dominion, and can justly slay me for breaking His laws, this creature of mine which I slay or destroy instead of myself, in recognition of these rights of God. The Almighty could justly claim even the sacrifice of human life. Indeed, He tested Abraham's fidelity, by demanding the sacrifice of Isaac; and we may say, that death and sickness form a kind of human sacrifice, if rightly understood. Our Lord, too, offered Himself as a sin-offering on the Cross, and His Sacrifice, a human one, was accepted. To kill one another, in sacrifice, is unjust and immoral and, as such, forbidden, and yet death, as a punishment for law-breaking, is, in many cases, quite legitimate and right. Society avenges itself on criminals, by death, without a twinge of remorse; and so too, does Nature, if we infringe her laws. Men rail at vicarious suffering, and the substitution of victims for the sins of others; but if we reflect, there is neither a nation nor an individual that is not actually suffering, *i. e.*, being sacrificed, for other people's sins. Offended Deity requires satisfaction for sin, just as offended society or outraged Nature.

But, there was only one sacrifice that could adequately atone for sin, that of Christ; for, as St. Paul says, "It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats, sin should be taken away" (Heb. x, iv). It was Christ, the Divine Victim for sin, "the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, who redeemed us in His blood," and who still applies that redemption to our souls, singly in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Bear in mind, that the rite of Sacrifice, as I said, did not cease at the crucifixion on Calvary. It is carried on, down through all ages, in the Mass. The holy rite has *never* ceased, and *never* will cease, any more than the worship of God, of which it is the one main central act, exclusively offered to Him. Sacrifice, there-

fore, is indestructible. In the Eucharistic form, it has been purified and uplifted, ever rising to God, with the sun, as the "clean oblation," the perpetual exercise on earth of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

II. Abel was the first type of Christ in His sacrificial aspect. His offering of a lamb in sacrifice, and his cruel death at the hands of a wicked brother, made him a marked type of our Lord, offering Himself, "The Lamb of God," on the altar of the Cross; and still, as high priest and victim, offering Himself in the Mass. Cain, who slew his innocent brother, was doomed to wander a branded criminal, away from the people of God; just as our Lord's brethren, the Jews, who slew Him, wander to-day away from the new Kingdom of God, without an altar, a temple, or a home.

Now, the new Abel, still offers acceptable sacrifice, in the mystic rite of Holy Mass. Therein, He undergoes mystic death, by the "two-edged sword," of the consecrating formula, in order that we may have life, and "abundance of life"; for His Blood therein "cries to God for mercy and grace more loudly than that of Abel."

People often ask in surprise, why He, who is the "God of the living, not of the dead," should look favorably on a rite of which death or destroyal is a necessary element. True, but it was sin that made the atoning sacrifice a necessity. Death by sacrifice was a sort of necessary sequence, a kind of Divine afterthought, like redemption, brought on by man's abuse of God's gift of liberty. And yet, the living God, rich in mercy, makes the death of Christ in Sacrifice issue into streams of fresh life. "Christ dies, that we may live." The law of sacrifice may be even called the law of life. Traces of this may be seen in nature, where life is ushered in by death. Rocks perish, are crushed, and ground down, to form the soil in which plants live. These, in turn, perish, that animals may

flourish and find life. We too, must keep down and slay the animal life, the lower self, that the life of the spirit, the higher life of grace, may reign in our souls. Well did our Lord say, "He that loseth his life will find it." Death to the body, by self-sacrifice, is life to the soul. How truly and aptly did He indicate the fruits of His own sacrificial death, by saying, "Unless the grain planted in the ground dieth, it itself remains alone." He died in obedience to the mysterious law of sacrifice, that countless saints might live. Through His death and burial, He has become "the life of our life." His body, the mystic grain, planted in the tomb, has grown up a hundredfold, furnishing the choice wheat, that in the holy Mass is transformed, by mystical destruction, into the "bread of the elect, and the wine bringing forth virgins." "I am the true Bread come down from heaven. He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi, 58).

Value then the holy Mass. It is a mine of priceless wealth. They who assist at it and, much more, they who communicate in it, unlock its treasures and need never "go empty away." We live in an age when the craze for pleasure and the shirking of all forms of sacrifice is undoing the work of Christ.

Let the holy Mass, therefore, be to us a life-long reminder of how Christ was "obedient unto death, even unto the death of the Cross." This is the lesson taught by the gospel of the day, and enforced still more strongly by our Lord's Eucharistic life in the Tabernacle. At every sick call, every visit, every Communion, to every demand of His creatures even, He seems to say, "Ecce venio," "Lo! I come ever ready to sacrifice myself for the brethren."

To each one of us, our home and sphere of duty is our Nazareth. Like Jesus, we have to go down there and "be subject" to those whom we are bound to obey, those, indeed, to whom we owe any

duty, for duty is obedience to God. As the fruit of the prayer of the Holy Hour to-day let us determine, therefore:

(1) To obey almighty God, *i. e.*, to be ever like Christ, "About our Father's business."

(2) To shrink from no act of self-denial, that the call of duty, in other words, obedience to God, requires.

(3) Rather say with our Lord in the garden, when the sacrifice asked of us seems more than we can bear, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done."

Second Sunday After Epiphany

Transubstantiation

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee."—Gospel of day.

The miracle of Cana is, in a manner, daily repeated in holy Mass. At Cana, our Lord changed water into wine; on our altars, He changes wine into His precious blood. In both cases, if you ask how, we can only say, by the power of His creative word. To replace nothingness by something, is as great a mystery as changing one thing into another. Both are the effects of infinite power. If the word *Transubstantiation* is not in the Bible the truth it stands for is. The term, well understood, is brimful of philosophical and theological thought, and aptly voices the mind of Christ, when, on a subsequent occasion, He used the words, "This is my body," and "This is my blood." The word also expresses the mind of the Church to-day, as it does that of the Church in the 4th century, uttered by St. Cyril, who says, "What seems to be bread is not bread; but the body of Christ: and what seems to be wine, is not wine; but the blood of Christ." The word of God given expression to, ministerially by the priest, flashes over the elements laid on the altar and effects the change of their substance into that of Christ's Body and Blood, which, thus veiled, becomes our spiritual food and drink. "For My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed" (John vi, 56).

I. In a certain sense we may say, God gives Himself to His

creatures in all His gifts, even in the very bread we eat, and the water we drink; but the wonder disclosed by the Mass is, that He has devised a means of actually giving us as food the body and soul He assumed when, "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us."

To perpetuate this indwelling, He made the Sacrifice of the new law, the holy Mass, assume the form of a sacrificial meal or banquet, wherein priest and people share in the Victim. Such was Mass at the Last Supper, in which the priest or host, our Lord Himself, shared with his guests, in the intimacy and close fellowship of a meal, the gifts He blessed and changed into His Body and Blood. In this bloodless form is the great Sacrifice of Christ carried on in the holy Mass.

The longing for Communion with God, in and through a sacrifice, in the form of a meal, existed both amongst Jews and Gentiles. The Paschal Lamb and many others mentioned in Scripture are instances in point. Even the pagans had their fabled banquets, wherein men sat down at tables with the gods. The religion of Mithra had "a sacrificial meal of bread and water, mingled with wine, which the priest had blessed."

"Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec," says holy David, speaking of our Lord. Now, St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, builds his argument for the royalty and priesthood of Christ, on his likeness to this obscure personage, named Melchisedec, all we know of whom is, that he was "King of Salem," and "priest of the most high God"; and that he offered in sacrifice, bread and wine, which Abraham and his soldiers were invited to share (Gen. xiv, 18).

All sacrifices, involving the consumption of the victim, or thing offered by the priest and people, were but forecasts, or distorted

symbols, of the one pure, holy, and bloodless Sacrifice of the Mass, that has succeeded, replaced, and abrogated all others.

Being a sacrifice in the form of a sacred meal, Mass must be completed by the priest's Communion. Hence, in case of sudden illness, or death after Consecration, and before Communion, a second priest is called in, to consume the Sacred Elements, *i. e.,* to finish the Sacrifice, by holy Communion. The essence of the Mass is in Consecration, but Communion is its completion. Though Communion on the part of those present at holy Mass is not required, yet all are earnestly invited to share in the Victim, mystically slain on the altar. It is the express wish of the Church, authoritatively declared at Trent, and emphatically renewed in the recent decrees on frequent Communion. Thus, and thus only, does the *public,* or as it is often called, the *community* Mass, realize the idea of the banquet, or great supper, wherein God, the Father Almighty, sits down at table with His children, to eat "the Bread of Life," the bread come down from heaven, our daily bread, as it is termed in God's own prayer, the "'Our Father"—a meal, moreover, to which all, even the lame, blind, and halt from the highways and byways of life are cordially invited.

II. Shrink not in dread from the thought of this close contact of the glorified body of Emmanuel, "God with us," with His imperfect, nay, even foul or wicked creatures, in holy Mass. The all-pure Body and Blood of Christ are no more affected by unworthy communicants, than is the Divinity in coming into contact with the foul, sordid, loathsome creatures of earth. The Mass is a pure and holy Sacrifice; and the Body and Blood of Christ, a Divine food, whether the priest who says it, or the communicant who shares in it, be a Judas, or a St. John. For, just as in the Passion, it was our Lord's body and soul that suffered in the tor-

ments He underwent, not the Divinity; so to-day, in the outrages and abuses heaped on the Blessed Sacrament, it is the visible accidents, not the august Presence they veil, that suffer. Men who say Mass or communicate in conscious unworthiness, "eat and drink damnation to themselves," it is true, but the glorified humanity, present in the host, is as little affected thereby, as the sun in the heaven, by what it shines on. And lest men should be shocked at the prospect of receiving Christ's visible and tangible body, or everwhelmed with the glitter and grandeur of the same body as now seen in heaven, He chooses to veil the reality, under the appearance of bread, the very staff of life, and wine, the juice of the most luscious fruit. Calvary was not a sacrificial meal, whereas the sacrifice of the cenacle was, and in the holy Mass, still is.

He said Mass Himself, the night before His crucifixion, and ordered His apostles to perpetuate the same ordinance, the same sacrificial meal, as He had just gone through, when "He took bread into His venerable hands, and said "This is my body," etc., "Do this," *i. e.*, repeat the same holy rite, "in remembrance of Me."

III. If you ask how the gifts of bread and wine we offer in holy Mass turn into the Body and Blood of our Lord, I can only say with the Catechism, "By the power of God." It is not the utterance of the priest's words in the Sacrifice, but the divine energy behind them that transforms the elements we see on the altar. At Cana of Galilee the host and his guests saw only in Jesus a young peasant from the neighboring village; but "the conscious water saw its God and blushed" into the new element of wine. Now, the same power is at work in the Mass. The power that drew from the empty void the wondrous worlds that dot the sky; and that is daily effecting magical, substantial changes through the instrumentality

of His handmaid, Nature, is not less effective in the daily Sacrifice of the Mass.

If you further ask what warrant have we for the wonders of the Mass, I can only say we believe they take place on the word, clearly and repeatedly expressed, of Him "who can neither deceive nor be deceived." We see these marvels by *faith,* not by sense; with the eye of the spirit, not the eye of the flesh. As our Lord said to those who rejected the truth of these very wonders, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Even in the realm of the natural the trained eye of a naturalist or a geologist sees a world of wonders in a flower or a fossil that are invisible to a rustic. In like manner the eye of a believer, trained and schooled in faith, sees a world of wonders in the Eucharist that no unbeliever can discern. "The carnal man perceiveth not the things that are of God." It is only the spiritually minded—those whose eyes have been opened the ears unstopped by the power of grace and truth that can recognize our Lord in this "the most wonderful of His works."

How can we sufficiently thank God, then, for the great marriage feast of the Lamb—the banquet prepared for us in holy Mass; and the gift of faith, to discern therein "the body of the Lord," made the food of our souls! Who will envy the guests at Cana, who had "Christ in their midst," since we may meet Him daily at the great sacrificial banquet of the holy Mass, and share in "the bread of the strong, and the wine bringing forth virgins," and which helps us to advance daily in spirit "from strength to strength."

We of "the holy hour," steeped in the memories of the Passion, know what it cost our Lord to have His Body bruised into the wheat that gives us our daily bread, His Blood strained in the wine-press to be our drink.

Let us not shrink, then, from a life of self-sacrifice. Our Lord's life on earth was one of continued sacrifice, as is to-day His sacramental life in holy Mass. Self-denial is the lesson He silently teaches by example, the most powerful of all sermons. To shirk the Cross is almost equivalent to denying Christ. Sacrifice is bitter, but He has sweetened it. It seems an anomaly, but really a life of self-sacrifice is a happy life, a continued feast—it is "Cana" with "Jesus in the midst."

Third Sunday After Epiphany

Christ, the Victim of the Sacrifice of the Mass

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."—Gospel of day.

These loving and humble words of the Centurion are now embodied in the Mass, and uttered by the priest before communicating himself or others. They express our feelings in being privileged to receive Christ, not merely into our houses, but into our breasts. Our Lord makes Himself the Victim of a sacrificial meal, that He may come to us and be one of us; and that we may be lost in Him, our God, though still remaining ourselves. It seems supreme folly; but it is the way with Infinite love, Who "delights to be with the children of men" and yearns for a return of their love. The crib and the Cross, and the holy house at Nazareth, spoke out this love of our Lord God; but Jesus was then only "passing by." He was constrained and limited to one fixed time and to one fixed place, whereas now, He perpetuates Himself everywhere, and at all times, in holy Mass and Communion. Whether without sin, love would have thus brought Him on a visit to our earth, we cannot tell, but we do know, that actually, "He loved us and delivered Himself for us," *i. e.*, He became our substitute, as a victim for sin. He came to undo the work of sin, and for this, both a priest and victim of Infinite worth were wanted. Christ became both, and in holy Mass is both. It was not the Jews nor the Romans who offered sacrifice on Calvary, it was Christ Himself, our High Priest. The

same takes place in the holy Mass. It is not the officiating priest, but Christ Himself, through a minister, voicing and personating Him to say Mass. Hence, the speckless holiness of the Mass. Our Lord is in it both offerer and offered, Priest and Victim at once.

I. Our thoughts to-day, during the "holy Hour," will turn to Christ, as the Victim of the daily Sacrifice. As we have already heard, the mystic rite of sacrifice did not cease with that of the Cross on Calvary. Christ who was crucified there remains ever an offering, or victim, for sin. He is ever the Lamb, "standing, as it were, slain"; or, as the prophet Malachi expressed it, "In every place, there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name, a clean oblation," *i. e.*, "A pure, holy, and spotless victim."

We cannot have a sacrifice without a victim, *i. e.*, something immolated by a priest on an altar or sacrificial table. The word victim, means something bound, because in olden times the oxen and other animals offered in sacrifice were decked and bound round with garlands of flowers.

Now, who, or what is the victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass? At first sight, it might seem to be the bread and wine, this being the thing offered, but no; they only form the remote matter of the sacrifice. When they are termed victim, or host in the offertory, it is only by way of anticipation, *i. e.*, as something to be made into a victim. The offering of the victim proper takes place in the prayer after the Consecration, when the bread and wine are already changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The real victim of the Mass is our Lord who lies on the altar, and in the chalice, under the appearance of bread and wine. Their substance has been replaced by that of the Victim of Calvary; and the accidents that produce sense impressions only remain. The permanent reality, or substance of the bread and wine, never an object of sense, is

gone. Our Lord is thus helplessly, as it were, bound to these appearances; and reduced to a state in which, by a self-imposed law, He is fit only to be the food and drink of His creatures. In this way, He who died once, and once only, on the Cross, assumes the state of victim in daily Mass, and satisfies all the requirements of a true sacrifice in the strictest and most technical sense of the term. The Mass is no mere figurative sacrifice, nor the Victim offered in it, either.

II. But, it may be said, if Christ is now immortal and impassible in heaven; if, to use St. Paul's words, "He dieth now no more, and death hath no longer dominion over Him," how can He be a victim in the Mass, since death, or its equivalent, is the necessary fate awaiting every victim offered in sacrifice?

True; but the death in holy Mass is moral or mystical, not physical, as on Calvary; a kind of death, sufficient for a sacrifice. The common view of the mystic death of the divine Victim in the Mass, is that involved in the distinct consecration of the bread and wine. To the eyes of the apostles at the Last Supper, as to ours in the Mass, the Body of our Lord lay in the bread, and His Blood in the cup, or chalice, as far as the actual words of Consecration went, though there was no physical separation of the Body and Blood. Hence, the essence of the sacrificial action, or mystic slaying of the Victim, is in the words of the Consecration. There is a parting or separation of the Victim's Body and Blood by a distinct verbal utterance over each element.

Another opinion places the mystic death of the divine Victim of the Mass in a moral lowering of state. He who is life itself, in its highest, most radiant, and glorious form, lies like a dead thing, without the use of bodily senses and organs, in its sacramental state, on the altar, is, so to say, a victim, bound, and at the mercy

of His creatures. This is equivalent to the death or destruction of Him who is our life. As was said, the Body and Blood of our Lord are safe from outrage; but the symbols or accidents that veil them may be injured, dragged about or thrown into the fire. Thus, our Lord annihilates Himself, to be a victim in the Mass, in the state of food.

A third opinion puts the essence of the representative, through real sacrifice of the Mass, in the offering, or presentation to God, of the Victim, *already slain.* The Victim was first destroyed or slain on the Cross, and thus made fit for continual sacrificial offering. Thus our Lord is ever presenting Himself, in His glorified state, as a victim for sin; and this is repeated and carried on in the Mass; a condition sufficient, it is said, for true sacrifice, without need of recourse to any mystic death or lowering state.

Whatever view we adopt, however, it ever remains true, that the great dramatic rite of holy Mass is a *true* and *real* re-presentation of the death of the Lord as Victim, "till He comes." The ordinance, enacted at the Last Supper, the Church, ever a true and faithful witness, exactly carries out. The mighty Word of God, like a two-edged sword, wielded through the ministry of her priests, severs mystically the Body from the Blood, and thus, sacrificially and mysteriously, effects the death of Christ once slain in reality on the Cross.

III. How can we sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in furnishing us with a holy rite, which, whilst preserving the essential character of a true sacrifice, yet does not wound or shock by the mangling of the sacred Victim; but is a "clean oblation" of Him, Who once died in unspeakable anguish on the Cross. The Victim is made bread for us, in marked opposition to the coarse repulsive sacrifices of old. Flowers deck the altar, golden wheat

and luscious wine are used, as veils to hide the glory of the Lord, and to draw man into sublime union with the divine Victim of Calvary. "The creature is thus delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii, 2), and in holy Mass, "all creatures, animate, and inanimate, praise the Lord."

Christ was made, and, in our daily sacrifice, still remains, the Victim, offered in atonement for our sins. It is we, not He, who should suffer; but surely, the love that urged such sacrifice will not be lost on us. As we kneel round our sacramental Lord, and reflect on what it meant, and still means to Him, to be the Victim, that has taken our place, in disarming the just wrath of God, let us resolve to make some return for all that He has done and still does for us. As Victim, He has more than paid the price of our redemption; but His merits must be applied to each one separately. Now, the fruits of His sacrifice come home to us personally, in the mystic immolation of ourselves to almighty God. We must grow like unto Him, in other words, we, too, must become victims. Of ourselves, we could not atone, for we could not be adequate victims, for one single venial sin; but with Christ, as our sin offering, our Victim, once on the Cross and daily in the Mass, "were our sins as red as scarlet, they shall be made whiter than snow."

We give, and perhaps, generously, to the altar. We contribute to the upkeep of the daily sacrifice; and the support of God's priests, but God wants more, He wants personal service. He wants victims of righteousness and duty, who can only be secured at the cost of personal sacrifice. The wheat, however rich, ripe and beautiful, must be ground and cleansed in mill and sieve, ere serving as fit matter for the holy Sacrifice; and the juice of the grape, has to be pressed and filtered, before being poured into the chalice of the

Lord. So must we, in a measure, in order to stand as worthy victims beside the Lamb of God, be slain for our sins.

Let us resolve, therefore, to mold our bodies, and train our minds by self-denial and daily carrying our cross, into fit victims of the life sacrifice required of us. As we have seen, death by sacrifice is the gate of life. The Victim of Calvary is He, "the Lamb, that reigneth and ruleth, for ever more." The devotion of the holy Hour is not meditation of our Lord, triumphant in heaven, but agonizing in the garden. In the words of St. Paul, therefore, "I beseech you by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii, 1).

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

Christ, Our Chief Priest in the Mass

"Then rising up, He commanded the winds, and the sea, and there came a great calm."—Gospel of day.

We sail over the sea of life in a storm-tossed ship, the bark of Peter, but we have Christ, "the Captain of our Salvation," amongst us. "Fear not, you carry Cæsar," was said to some mariners of old; but why should we be "fearful and of little faith," since we carry Christ and His Vicar. Though our silent Lord seems to sleep in His tabernacle, yet we know that He watches over us, and in due time will lull the threatening storm, for it is not Cæsar, but Christ whom "winds and waves obey."

We rightly put our trust in God, the controller of events, "the Lord of life and death," and yet how fearfully dependent we are on His creatures. Through them He guides and rules us. The snapping of a link, in the endless chain of causes between God and us, would hurl us into the abyss of death. No ship at sea is more dependent on its captain than we on our fellow creatures in the great ship called the "Earth." Under God they hold the keys of life and death in our regard. And this is true not only for the life of the perishable body, but for that of the undying soul. In this life creatures feed, clothe, heal and rule us—minister, in fact, to all our material needs. So in the spiritual order our soul's needs and wants are provided for by God through our fellow-man. Hence, at all times religion, the soul's most crying need, has had a priest-

hood, or some public ministry equivalent to a priesthood, to minister to us herein. "Let no priest come between our souls and God" is a senseless cry. Hosts of creatures do actually come between our souls and God, for good or for evil, just as they come between our bodies and God. To tell people to go straight to God, and to Him only, in their spiritual wants, is like telling children to go straight to God for their meals and their lessons. There is a long chain of mediators, or helpers, between God and us. Christ Himself, our great "Mediator with the Father," is, in His human nature, a creature.

I. The main rite of public and external worship is Sacrifice; and priests have been ever chosen to enact this rite. Priest, altar and sacrifice are, therefore, correlative and connotative terms. They imply one another. "Every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. v, 1), says St. Paul.

As our Lord is our first Mediator, so He is in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass our chief Priest. We have already seen how He is the Victim of the holy Sacrifice; to-day we shall dwell on His being its chief offerer or priest as well.

On the altar of the Cross He was priest and victim, and is such likewise in the Mass. The Mass is a great drama, in which the priest you see, though truly a priest, yet merely represents our Lord; and utters and performs not his own words and actions, but those of Christ. He uses the first, not the third, person. He says, "This is *my* body," "This is *my* blood." He thus personates and voices Christ. Hence, once on the altar, the celebrant or officiating priest, whatever he may be personally, is yet, representatively, everything. All bow and yield precedence to him. Bishops and prelates and civil officials, if in the sanctuary, take rank after, not

before, him. And why? Because he is the organ, and instrument, and mouthpiece of Christ, our High Priest. Christ our Lord offers up holy Mass through him. Hence, the tremendous dignity and responsibility of the priest, though only secondary and ministerial. The Mass is always a "clean and holy" Sacrifice, ever a gift or offering agreeable and acceptable to God. It can never be debased or degraded by unworthy ministers or low surroundings. It is beyond the reach of man's frailty, malice or unworthiness. Like the sun, it is ever shining, though darkness and cloud may hinder our view of it; for Christ, who first offered it at the Last Supper and on the Cross, is still both its priest and victim. Visibly offered at every hour of the day and night by many human hands, it is, notwithstanding, the "clean oblation," of our one, invisible High Priest, who is "with us all days, even to the end of the world." Just as in the Church at large, the Pope is the visible head under Christ, its invisible head; so at holy Mass, your pastor is but the ministerial and visible priest under Christ, the primary and invisible. We have still, "therefore, even on earth, a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." In His glorified state, He is our mediator and advocate with the Father; and in His sacramental state, our priest and advocate also an earth. During holy Mass, the priest, so to say, divests himself of his own personality and puts on that of Christ. He becomes our Lord representatively, using Christ's own words; but the power and the will behind these words are those of Christ-God.

II. Many see no signs of a priesthood in the Christ of the Gospels at all; merely a "preacher and doer of the word," one "powerful in work and word," and no more. Now I ask who said Mass, *i. e.*, who consecrated or sacrificed at the Last Supper? Who offered to God the sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary? Not cer-

tainly the Centurion and his soldiers who saw in Christ an ordinary *criminal*. None other than He, of whom holy David said in the great messianic psalm: "The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec" (Ps. cix, 4), who, as we know, was "a priest of the most high God," and offered, sacrificed and distributed bread and wine (Gen. xiv, 18). Christ was born a priest and a victim to undo sin by the Sacrifice of Himself, and this work He still carries on in holy Mass. "All power was given Him in heaven and on earth," including, of course, that of supreme priesthood or mediatorship. The infinite wrong of sin could only be undone by a sacrifice wherein priest and victim are of infinite worth. Thus, He alone was competent to discharge our debt. Man in nature, God in person, and one of our race, He became, and still remains, our priest and victim in the one true abiding Sacrifice. Herein lie the value and grandeur of the Mass. The gift and the giver, the priest and the victim, are divine. "France is surely worth a Mass," Henry of Navarre is reported to have said on his conversion to Catholicism. In truth, the whole world, the boundless universe, is *not* worth a Mass. The world is of finite value, the worth of the Mass is infinite. The value of the one is measured by time and creatures, that of the other by eternity and God.

How much more attentively, reverently and devoutly, then, should we hear holy Mass, if only we could keep in mind that our Lord Himself is chief priest and offerer. He stands at the altar between God and us; He offers His own adorable Body and Blood, as on the Cross, for our sins. Those sins, as far as could be, He made His own, for they were the sins of the race to which He belonged, and of which He became and remains the representative and high priest. He thus continues daily His sublime office of priest in the holy

Mass. He it is who calls and makes other men His brethren, priests, and through them, as His organs and instruments, exercises His divine priesthood. Their priesthood overflows from Him.

Owing to the royalty of Christ, the new Adam, head of mankind, we are said to belong to a kingly race, so do we also, through His priesthood, belong to a "priestly race." He represents us and offers sacrifice in our name. We, too, have, like priests, in a manner, to offer gifts and sacrifices. God asks our hearts, but they must, in view of our sins, be "humble and contrite." This gift "He will never despise." Let us then offer this great inner sacrifice in union with the great external Sacrifice of Christ, our high priest. We must join Him, be one with Him, in His offering. As we spend the holy hour in His presence, and reflect on Him agonizing in the garden, we shall learn what it cost Him to be our high priest. Let us be generous and grateful, offer up our whole being in sacrifice; then, will the priesthood of Christ become to us a source of grace and life.

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany

Christ in the Mass Our King

"The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—To the reverent, the intelligent, and the devout the tiniest work of God's suggests a world of wonders. A seed in our garden, a flower by the wayside, a flash of lightning, or a ray of sunshine, opens up the gates or avenues of the soul, "to let in the King of glory." They all point to infinite knowledge, infinite beauty, infinite power, and infinite goodness. They all reveal God, to whom our hearts should turn, on beholding them, as flowers to the sun. There is no cockle in God's work. That is the devil's planting. Evil is man's perversion of what God made good. Fallen spirits, whether devils or men, turn His gifts and works into tares and cockle. Wherever real evil is found, an enemy, *i. e.*, some godless being, "hath done this."

We meet here to-day, in holy prayer, around God's greatest work, and most generous gift to men, the holy Eucharist; and yet this gift, this "bread from heaven," may, in some hearts, grow up into cockle. Our Lord was set for "the fall and resurrection of many in Isreal." So is He in the Eucharist. Its effects may be eternal life, or eternal death, a holy Communion with our King and God, or a sacrilege, by which, a man, "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Again, the hearing or saying of holy Mass may be good grain or cockle, according as the heart of the hearer is godly or godless. In

holy Mass and Communion we reap as we sow—eternal life, if worthy; eternal death, if unworthy.

To benefit by a thing we must know its worth. Ignorant savages will give away gold and precious stones for gaudy trinkets. Many profit little by their Masses and Communion, because they know not their worth. Bad Communions in St. Paul's time arose, we know, from the people not "discerning the body of the Lord."

Whoever seriously reflects that in hearing holy Mass there is but the thinnest of veils between us and the "King of Glory?"

We have already seen in what sense our Lord is both priest and victim in the sacrifice of the Mass. Furthermore, He is there, in all His kingly dignity, a thought which will furnish us with food for reflection to-day. It may help to choke the cockle of evil, in the heart, when present at the holy Mysteries.

The office of priest in early days was often merged in that of king or head of the State. Sacrifice was a public and national act of divine worship, and none deemed fitter or worthier than he who stood as head or representative of the tribe, family, or kingdom.

Our Lord, it is said, was anointed above "His fellows," as "King, Priest, and Prophet." All these functions He now exercises in the holy Mass. Just as He is the invisible Head or King in His Kingdom, the Church, so, in this same capacity, He comes in holy Mass. The Mass, it is true, is a memorial of the Passion, but it was just chiefly in the Passion that His Kingship gleamed forth. He was condemned to death for laying claim to royalty; thorns crowned His head; His sceptre, a reed; His royal robe, a purple rag; His courtiers, a mocking throng, and yet in manly and dignified bearing, in all kingly aspect, He showed Himself throughout a king of men. "Art thou a king?" said Pilate. "Thou hast said it. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world" (John xviii,

37), was the reply. "He hath on His garment and on His thigh written 'King of kings and Lord of hosts'" (Apoc. xix, 16). "At the name of Jesus let every knee bow, even kings and rulers, of those that are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth." Though "His kingdom is not this world," it is all the deeper, and firmer, and more lasting, for "Of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Now, this royal dignity of His is publicly proclaimed in holy Mass. High Mass, *i. e.*, the oldest form of Mass, is like a solemn state reception of our divine King. All that love and loyalty can do or command in the way of nature and art are lavished on His altar throne. Church and sanctuary are decked out with our best offerings. Faithful people and devoted clergy gather together, and all drop on their knees in profound homage when He enters meekly and silently at the words of Consecration. Even royal personages bend in lowly adoration at the entry of Him whom Pilate had scourged and crowned with thorns, and presented to the Jews as their king. Nevertheless, to-day under a still lowlier form than that in which the prophet saw Him in vision as a "worm and no man," He is hailed as King. Arms are presented in some countries, if soldiers are worshipers. At some places and periods He was saluted by the people, when the elevation bell announced His coming, with a universal shout of acclamation, "Welcome, Jesus, our King." Is not the Gloria we sing at Mass but an echo of the angels' welcoming song when they joined the shepherds in hailing the new-born King?

St. John's radiant vision, described in the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse, is said to be based on the ritual of the Mass used in His day. In it he speaks of the "Four and twenty ancients, who cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "Thou art worthy, O Lord

our God, to receive honor, and glory, and power. . . . The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction" (Apoc. iv, 10; v, 12).

If He comes not in pomp and majesty, as earthly kings, it is to spare us confusion and draw us more readily to Himself. He still, even on our lowly altars, can command "millions of angels," as in the garden of Gethsemane; but He prefers "to empty Himself of His glory" to become "the true Bread that came down from heaven," of which "he that eateth hath eternal life." When the saintly King Louis was told that our Lord was visibly present in the host at Mass, he refused to go and witness the miracle, saying: "I do not wish to lose the merit of faith by seeing this marvel."

So should it be with us. If we see no signs of royalty as St. John saw when he beheld the great throne whence "proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders," still we can behold with a certainty stronger than that given by eye or ear, on His lowly altar throne, and under the form of the Host, the same Lamb of God that the loved disciple saw "standing, as it were slain." He comes to us as really in His sacramental state of Victim, as if we saw Him hanging visibly on the Cross; and what is more, we can have Him amongst us at all times and in all places. For, in the Eucharist, He daily renews on our altars the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

Earthly kings reside only in the center of their dominions, and deign to appear only to a few, at stated times and fixed places. Christ, our victim King, comes to us daily in every Mass, at every spot of His vast dominion, from the center to its remotest outpost. Wherever there is a priest, with even a portable altar, there does Christ erect His throne and give audience and glad welcome to His

subjects. He is grateful for the pomp and splendor we bestow on fitting up a worthy dwelling; but He dispenses with it all, and is equally at home in a gorgeous cathedral or a lonely village chapel. He seeks not gifts of gold or silver. What He asks for, and never dispenses with, are loving hearts and believing minds. This is the sole tribute He demands and exacts of those who would share the privileges of His kingdom.

There are many who, on principle, profess to abhor both the name and claim of king; but there can be no cavilling with the title when applied to one who is not merely man, but God-man; and the law of whose kingdom is the reverse of what rules in this world.

In the Mass, as in life, our King teaches us by word and example to be "meek and humble of heart," to hide rather than display, what raises us above others. In His kingdom "the first are last, and the last first." His vicar on earth, though necessarily bound to show forth the royalty of Christ, may yet be chosen from the lowest social ranks; and ever signs himself *"Servus Servorum Dei."*

Let, then, the outward reverence and homage we pay to our Saviour King, on His holy altar, mirror our inward love, awe, and adoration. Let us ever play the part of loyal and devoted subjects. Let us keep His laws, honor His name and authority, fight for His rights, and ever do our best to extend His kingdom.

As we kneel in holy prayer and reflect what our Eucharistic King is to us, and what He has done for us, let us not leave His presence without firmly resolving to be true, faithful and loyal to Him in life and death. Let us never be of those who are ashamed to bend the knee, or otherwise show outward homage, in His royal presence, when we pass a church, hear holy Mass, or assist at Benediction. And let this outward homage be a true index of our inward loyalty and love.

Septuagesima

Christ in the Mass Our Teacher

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Idleness is a vice, work a duty. From honest toil, therefore, of brain or muscle, none must shrink. It is an atonement for, and preservative against, sin, and is, besides, a key to health and happiness; but if done without reference to almighty God, it is energy wasted. Hence, if we would not be of those who, as the prophet says, "put their wages in a bag with holes," we must enter the "service," *i. e.*, "the vineyard of the Lord." We must not, like so many workers, leave religion out of our lives. Worthy motives and the wish to serve God should permeate and sanctify our humblest tasks.

But we deal here with work done directly and exclusively for God. Thus, the care of the soul, the laying up treasure in heaven, is a divine work. Prayer likewise is one of the highest and hardest forms of work, as it taxes all the powers of soul and body. For mind, heart, and voice combine therein to praise the Lord.

But there is no form of prayer, and therefore no form of work more sublime than the saying or hearing holy Mass. The very word *Liturgy* usually applied to the Mass and its attendant ceremonial means work.

Our Lord exercised and sanctified all forms of labor, from hard manual work to that of being a preacher and teacher, in Israel. His main offices or forms of work, however, were those of king, priest,

and prophet—offices which He still carries on through the ministry of His priests, in holy Mass. We have already seen how He acts as priest and king in the holy Sacrifice. To-day we shall dwell on His function therein as prophet or teacher. To go to Mass is to go to school. If only attentive, devout and intelligent, we get the best of all lessons from the best of all teachers. "Hear ye Him," were words uttered by a divine voice on Thabor; and this we do when we hear holy Mass.

Apart, indeed, from the living word that animates it, the whole Mass itself, from beginning to end, is a great object lesson. It is a vast mine of sacred learning, practically inexhaustible. Huge volumes in all languages treat of it historically, liturgically, and devotionally without having yet exhausted its treasures.

If a church with its wealth of symbolism, and which is but a shrine and covering for the altar, at which holy Mass is said, is rightly called a book in stone, what must the Mass itself be, which gives life and meaning, both to church and altar? Eye and ear, and mind and heart, if trained and tuned, drink in from holy Mass copious draughts of divine Wisdom. There is not a single ceremony, action, gesture or prayer that does not convey to the enlightened some point of creed or ritual replete with holy interest. Indeed, outsiders have often a clearer insight of the beauty and charm of the Mass, from the mere study of its history, than we have.

High Mass, particularly, is like a sacred drama, or historical pageant, of the story of sacrifice in the old and new dispensation, told in speech, action and song, from Abel to Christ, and thence down to our own days. In it, too, we may study the life, passion, death and resurrection of Him who is still its chief actor, its priest, and its victim.

But the Mass is no mere pageant, bringing back the past in empty show. It is a living reality, a book, if you will, instinct with life, out of which our Lord reads and explains in figure, type, and actual fulfilment, all that He did and suffered to win back His lost sheep and bring them to green pastures; *i. e.,* feed them on His Body and Blood. Hence, where Mass is said regularly, Christ cannot be forgotten or misunderstood. On the other hand, where the Mass dies out, He recedes, and if not forgotten or ignored, becomes a mere historical figure.

As at Emmaus, so in the Mass, Christ opens up the Scripture and shows His disciples "how it behooved Him" to suffer the very things that shocked them and shook their faith in Him. To men of good will He reveals in the Mass the mysteries of His life, death and passion, and sheds light on the dark spots of God's dealings with men. You, more than others, brethren, who spend the holy hour in His Eucharistic presence, know the treasures of wisdom distilled from His lips in holy Mass. In the mute eloquence of mind to mind, and of heart to heart, your living and loving Saviour unfolds His ways and wishes till your hearts glow within you, and you beg Him to tarry longer on His altar throne, and stay even "till it grows late."

But how, it may be said, can Christ be our teacher in the Mass, seeing that it is often hastily said, and that, too, in a strange tongue, and by a fellow man, not always either reverent or devout; if, indeed, the din, and clatter, and distance from the altar allow us to hear anything at all? True. But remember that when the divine Teacher instructs a soul, He needs not the organs of speech or sight. The Church is taught of God, yet we neither see nor hear Him. The Holy Spirit is her guide to all truth, but He is not the object of vision. Our Lord is High Priest and Victim in Mass,

yet we see Him not, so is He teacher. Besides, to every priest authorized by Peter "to teach us the way of God in truth," our Lord has said: "He that heareth you, heareth Me." What we learn about the Mass in school or at catechism, or in reading good books, comes to light and bears fruit a hundredfold when assisting at it under the direct action and teaching of our Lord, who is present. It matters little who is God's agent in revealing what the Mass is, provided that the divine Teacher acts upon mind and heart when we are present. We may fail to see or hear what goes on, without losing the lesson of the Mass; for the Mass is neither a service nor a sermon. It is a great action, a tremendous sacrifice, even though the personating agent, voicing our High Priest, King and Teacher, forgets his sacred office and hurries through the action hastily, irreverently, and indevoutly.

Again, the venerable languages, whether Latin, Greek, Coptic or Armenian, in which Mass is said, so far from shrouding or hiding, rather help to reveal it. They preserve the doctrine and prayers it enshrines in all their primitive beauty and integrity, and link them to the ages that are past. Like a fly preserved in amber, the Mass is thereby guarded from change or rude handling. To us in the West, Latin, the official language of the Church, can hardly be called a dead language at all. Every child may find a translation side by side with the original in the prayer-books he uses; and both at school and at church the great action and the method of assisting at it are explained. Indeed, the Mass is a moving, living action, that needs no knowledge of the tongue used in carrying it on. If anything in these days of easy, rapid, and frequent traveling, Latin is a help to devotion, rather than a hindrance. It makes us feel at home in every corner of our Father's house, the Church of God, all the world over.

You, dear brethren, who during this holy hour enjoy deeper and more intimate communion with our Eucharistic Master, know what it is at Mass, or elsewhere, to hear a divine voice, and learn from the lips of a divine Teacher, whether it be deep silence or the hum of Babel that reigns around.

When, therefore, the priest commences holy Mass, Jesus also begins "To do and teach." You draw deep draughts of divine wisdom from it, because you are apt and willing scholars. In this school of divine wisdom, as in every other, the best lessons of the best of all teachers are hopelessly lost on pupils who are neither attentive, docile, nor intelligent.

The school of the Mass reproduces and carries on the school of Calvary. The Cross was both an altar and a pulpit. Christ was there, as in the Mass, priest, victim and teacher; but with what different effects on those present. Some mocked, others disbelieved, many disciples were absent, a few watched, listened and adored, and left justified; and the same happens at holy Mass. A large number of our Lord's disciples keep away. Many scoff at the sacred rite as folly and superstition; others stand faithfully by and gain peace, and rest, and pardon, and grace under the very shadow of the Sacrifice.

To take part in the Mass is a duty—part of our day's work in the vineyard. It is a public function of divine worship, in which we are part offerers with Christ and the priest who represents Him. There is no more sublime work in life than this. Let us, therefore, do it well, and realize that Christ is there as our King, Priest, and Teacher.

Sexagesima

First Main End of Mass to Render God Adequate Homage

"Other some fell upon good ground, and being sprung up, yielding fruit a hundred fold."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—He who uttered these words and around whom, in His sacramental state, we meet in holy prayer to-day was and is both the sower and the seed. His body was the divine wheat, ground for us in the Passion, to become "the bread from heaven," "containing all manner of sweetness," and which, planted in the good soil of fervent hearts, will grow up a hundredfold in eternal life. At the Incarnation the Word, that was, "In the beginning," with God, and that "was God," fell a single grain in a spotless virgin's womb. Now, however, multiplied beyond measure in the holy Eucharist, it falls daily on our altars in plenteous showers to become the heavenly manna, "Which he that eateth shall not die forever."

And yet, a bad soil, a wicked human heart, may turn this divine seed into tare and cockle, and thus make the very "staff of divine life" a poison, leading swiftly to everlasting death. For, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."

To shun this fate and "discern this food," we must look well into this mysterious gift of the Eucharist, at once a sacrifice, bringing us closely to God, and a Sacrament, drawing God to us. We are now dealing with it as a sacrifice. We have already seen how our

Lord comes to us in the Mass as priest and victim, king and teacher. The Mass is thus saved from the corruptions and abuse into which the holy rite of sacrifice, amongst Jews and Gentiles, fell.

To-day we shall dwell on one of the four main ends for which holy Mass, the sole legitimate form of sacrifice in existence, is offered.

Now, the first duty of a creature is the worship of his God. Man is bound thereby to adore and thank God, atone for sin, and ask for help and grace. At all times men have believed that these four forms of worship were best expressed and the duties they imposed best discharged by sacrificial rites. Hence the four ends of sacrifice in general; and of holy Mass in particular. By adoration and thanksgiving we render due honor to God in the Mass; by atonement and petition we seek the benefit of men.

Protestants and Mohammedans who, in other respects, borrowed largely both from our creed and ritual, stand alone in rejecting sacrifice as the chief rite in the worship of God. And yet it is the only public, outward rite, or form of worship, that even attempts to express adequately God's supreme dominion as Creator, and our supreme dependence as creatures.

The first end or claim of the Sacrifice of the Mass, as of all forms of sacrifice, is, therefore, to render to God due homage or adoration. God is sovereign Lord and Master; and all creatures, however gifted, be they ever so speckless and stainless, are His subjects, and as such bound to worship Him, *i. e.*, bound to adore. Flaming Cherub and burning Seraph, all the hosts of intelligent beings, angels, or men that people the universe, are thus bound to do homage to God in recognition of His supreme dominion. The instinct of worship is inherent in all creatures dowered with a mind capable of knowing Him; and a heart of loving Him. And yet,

if exercised to the fullest throughout eternity, they fail to worship God adequately, because the note of infinity is wanting. God is infinite and deserving of boundless homage; the creature is necessarily hedged in with limitations. The combined praise and adoration of all creatures fails to render homage, praise, and adoration equal to that of a single Mass. For the adoration offered by the divine personality of Christ, our High Priest and Victim in the Holy Sacrifice, is infinite and adequate. Our humble tribute of prayer and praise merged in the Mass is thus transformed into the prayer of Christ, thereby acquiring infinite worth. It is a comfort to know that in regard to almighty God, and quite independently of the merits of the secondary offerer or the people assisting at it, holy Mass effects its first great purpose of securing to God due worship in the world. The great stream of sacrificial prayer never ceases. The divine Victim, the holy and spotless Body and Blood of the Man God, multiplied unceasingly on our altars at holy Mass, like the seeds sown by the sower in the gospel, the Hosts consecrated therein for holy Communion and perpetual adoration, all insure and sustain a permanent note of divine worship worthy of God and pleasing to Him, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same."

There were sad periods in the life of the Church, when, in certain places, the clergy were unfaithful and the people godless and corrupt; and yet the incense of worthy, unceasing homage to God never failed to rise in clouds from her altars. The sweet, pure air is ever blowing; and the bright sunshine ever gladdening, though men in some places do their best to exclude them, or escape from them. So it is with holy Mass, ever ascending a pure and spotless offering of adoring prayer in the sight of the Most High, neglect it as men may.

To secure our not keeping away at this solemn public act of divine worship, the Church makes attendance at Mass on Sundays and holidays a matter of grave obligation. This precept binds under grave sin, unless legitimately dispensed. No amount of private prayer or devotion can make up for the Mass.

For, over and above inward sacrifice of mind and heart in the offering of prayer and praise, men ever deemed it binding to join together in corporate public worship, that, as I said, usually assumed the form of sacrificial rites. To us the Mass is all this, as it enables us to discharge the fourfold debt of worship in the most perfect manner. Hence the importance of attendance at Sunday Mass. No other service of the Church can make up for it. All, therefore, capable of understanding, unless prevented by sickness, distance from church, or excused by some duty, binding in justice or charity, are strictly obliged in conscience to join in the solemn act of homage that can be offered to God alone, and which receives its infinite value from the dignity of the High Priest, who offers it, Christ our Lord.

How sad to think that so many knowing all this and living under the very shadow of the church, yet either stay away altogether, or neglect it under the most frivolous pretexts.

Be it ours ever to join in, and to use, not merely on days of obligation, but every day, if possible, this great means of giving glory to God. The first duty of a soul is to seek the glory of God; and nowhere does God receive more glory than in the Mass. It is, as it were, the summons of our heavenly King to attend His court.

What sacrifices will not people make, I do not say to accept the invitation of the great or the powerful, but even to see them "pass by." Our Lord appears daily on our altars to do homage for us—to transform our weak, puny efforts at adoration, "in spirit and truth," into worship worthy of an angel, nay, of God, for He offers

Mass in person. He invites us not merely to attend, but to join the officiating priest and Himself in the "clean oblation," ever sure of acceptance in God's sight.

The call that draws us here to-day to the prayer of the "holy hour," is meant to sustain the note of homage to God, in union with our Lord's prayer in the garden, and ever kept up and carried on in holy Mass. He was the victim of sin in the garden, and "He prayed the longer." That prayer was no transient act. Christ prays still. The infinite dignity of His person lends infinite value to the homage His prayer renders to His Father. We join in it and share its fruits in holy Mass.

Hereby you will make amends for the teeming millions that never bend the knee in worship to God at all. The Mass is the main stream of adoration offered to the divine Majesty by one who, in person divine, is yet a fellow man, a brother, the head and representative of His race and ours.

Let us respond to His invitation by ever assisting at holy Mass regularly and fervently, for there is no better way than this of rendering due homage to almighty God.

Quinquagesima

The Mass a Thank Offering

"And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—When these words were uttered, our Lord was but a casual visitor in the world, one merely "passing by" the spots on earth, blessed and honored by His presence. To-day He is amongst us as a permanent guest, who visits us daily in holy Mass, and lingers behind in the Tabernacle. There is not an outpost in the "Kingdom of God" that is not thus sanctified by His corporal presence. Nor does He come to us with empty hands. He enters laden with gifts, ready at every sinful leper's cry to grant mercy and healing grace. He is our spokesman, too, with His Father, and renders Him adequate thanks in our name. For thanksgiving is one of the main duties we owe to God in divine worship, and the second of the chief ends or purposes for which the rite of Sacrifice was instituted.

In view of the gifts of God strewn around us as leaves in the forest, or sands by the seashore, thoughtful men have, at all times, and under all forms of religion, tried to show their gratitude by offerings to the Divinity. Hence, the various kinds of what were called "peace," or "thank offerings." A portion of God's own gifts were solemnly dedicated to Him and destroyed, thus forming sacrificial rites. All forms of sacrifices, as was said, are now summed up and centered in the holy Mass, which is, therefore, the world's

great thank offering. The duty of thanksgiving finds its sole adequate expression and fulfilment in the great Eucharistic Sacrifice. The very words Eucharist signifies thanksgiving, thus showing the fitness of the Mass as a means of showing gratitude to almighty God for His many benefits. "Holy Mass," says St. Irenaeus, writing in the third century, "was instituted that we might not appear thankless before God." Indeed, the sacred rite is permeated with a tone and savor of thanksgiving confident even to boldness, that we are rendering herein to the "Giver of every good and perfect gift" a thank offering, adequate to discharge the claims of gratitude His gifts impose upon us. This feeling finds fullest expression in the triumphant hymn, or song of thanksgiving, called the Preface, which closes the Offertory and introduces the action of the Mass proper, the Canon.

The three evangelists and St. Paul, who give us the history of the institution of the Mass at the Last Supper, state expressly that our Lord gave thanks on taking the matter of sacrifice into His hands.

So great is the debt of gratitude we owe to almighty God, that without the Mass as a means of discharging it, we should stand bankrupt before Him.

Hence, the Almighty, rejecting the very thank offerings and other forms of sacrifice He himself had ordained, speaks of a new one to come that should be ever acceptable to Him; one that neither an unworthy priesthood, nor an ungrateful people could corrupt or abuse. "If," He says, "you offer the blind for sacrifice, if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil," for the victims chosen for sacrifice had, by law, to be sound and speckless; but He goes on to reject *all* their sacrificial offerings. "I have no pleasure in you . . . and I will not receive a gift of your hand." Then, the prophet, rapt in ecstasy, as if in actual vision of the new form of

sacrifice that should supersede and replace all others, exclaims: "For, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the gentiles, and in every place, there is *sacrifice,* and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Mal. i, 8, 10, 11). Now, this new thank offering, this clean sacrificial rite, can be no other but the Mass. It is the only form of sacrifice extant among the Gentiles, who have succeeded the Jews, as the people of God. It has been retained as an essential form of worship by the various sects cut off from the Church before the time of the so-called reform. Many, even of those who have inherited the sad legacy of the Reformation, are now doing their best to reintroduce the Mass as a divine ordinance, so strong is their conviction of its need, and worth, and truth. What else *can* the prophet mean, if not the Mass? He could not refer to the inward sacrifice of prayer, the outpouring of men's grateful hearts, for this form of sacrifice, if such it can be called, is not new, but as old and as binding in conscience as the heart itself. Besides, prayer is only sacrifice in a metaphorical sense. Nor could he mean the sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross, for this was offered in only one place, and at one time, besides being cruel, bloody, and repulsive; whereas, the new sacrifice was to be *"clean,"* and offered up "in every place," *i. e.,* "from the rising to the setting sun.

Were man sinless, Mass would be only a thank offering; now it is that, and more. It still remains true, however, that one of the chief characteristics of prayer and sacrifice is thanksgiving. Man is the high priest of nature and should voice her thanks to our common Maker and Benefactor. It is only from a human heart that streams of formal and grateful thanks can well forth to the Being who made everything good, thankworthy, and beautiful. The grateful heart should ever go out to and turn to God, as flowers to the

sun. In the ocean of His gifts we are as fishes in the sea, or birds in the air. His myriad of favors, in grace and nature, are so many trumpet calls to a life of gratitude, and its expression in perpetual thanksgiving. How shall we pay the debt of gratitude? "What," indeed, "shall we give to God for all He hath given unto us?" But stay! We have the Mass. Therein we can show our gratitude by an offering and an offerer supremely worthy of God and acceptable in His sight. He cannot refuse our gift, for it is the Body and Blood of His own divine Son, "In whom He is ever well pleased." Priest and victim in this clean oblation are divine, and therefore adequate to the great aim and purpose of sacrifice—that of thanksgiving. "I will, therefore, take the Chalice of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv, 13). The cup of our salvation, *i. e.*, the Mass, taking part for the whole, is what we can confidently "render to God for all that He hath rendered to us" (*Idem*).

We do not ponder enough on the grandeur of the Mass as a thank offering for God's favors. No doubt atonement for sin comes home to us more in the thought of the Holy Sacrifice; and yet, one of the worst elements in sin is its ingratitude. By nature, however, we are not ungrateful. We abhor ingratitude as a vice. We expect thanks for any kindness shown another, and return thanks ourselves. Indeed, the word "thanks" is never off our lips. We even thank bountiful nature for her gifts, and express our gratitude to her blind and speechless powers—the air, and sun, and water. To take all and give nothing in return, by way of thanks, is deemed abnormal and unnatural. The very sea gives back, in copious rains, to the earth what it receives in the mighty rivers that pour into its bosom; and the earth itself expresses its gratitude by abundant harvests, for the care and labor men bestow upon it. Thus an offering of gifts and a return of thanks is the normal course of

things. So should it be in the world of the spirit. God, the great Spirit, is the giver of every good and perfect gift; and to Him all our thanks should return, directly or indirectly. How beautiful, and yet how just, and logical, and deserving is the simple expression of the Mass, "Deo Gratias," Thank God. Thank Him, therefore, in health, wealth, and worldly prosperity; though transient and dangerous, they are His gifts. Thank Him, too, in poverty, sickness, and neglect. They are a safeguard against sin, and the best coin wherewith to barter temporal life and good for eternal. Thank God for the cross, as well as for the crown. We thank the doctor for his bitter, nauseous medicine, and the surgeon for his cruel knife; and why not God, the heavenly physician of our souls for the Cross. Our puny thanks, however, compared with God's gifts, are but a drop of water to the ocean, a grain of sand to the earth. Let us go, then, to the altar of God in holy Mass. There we shall find our High Priest and Brother, Jesus Christ, ready to offer in His name, and ours, a gift, a supreme thank offering, pleasing to God, and ample for the purpose of full, complete thanksgiving. The person that offers, and the gift, are of infinite worth; and the debt of gratitude we owe to God thereby cancelled. But there is one thing we must give with the Mass, and that is our hearts. They are ours to give. "Son, give Me thy heart," is God's prayer to us. They are a poor offering in themselves, but in union with the Sacred Heart, made meek and humble like our Lord's; and contrite, too, as becomes sinners; they form the gift that God "will never despise." No more fitting time to make this offering than during that supremely perfect thanksgiving sacrifice, holy Mass.

First Sunday in Lent

The Mass an Atoning Sacrifice for Sin

"Not in bread doth man live."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—To weaken the flesh is to strengthen the spirit. Such is the lesson of our Lord's forty days' fast: "Not in bread alone doth man live." There is a hunger and a thirst of the soul after righteousness, that neither "bread nor games," nor tempting visions of "the kingdom of this world, and the glory of them," can allay. Such souls as feel this craving and "are led by the Spirit into the desert," of a holy and retired life, do not fall easily into the devil's trap. Dearth of bread, or, rather, the fear of the honest toil necessary to earn it, has no terrors for them. To such as these a good life means more than "to be filled with fatness, with corn, and wine, and oil." "They seek first the kingdom of God and His justice," sure, that "all else, in the way of daily bread, will be added to them."

They have higher wants, and to stay the hunger and thirst these wants produce, God has provided in the wilderness "the bread of the strong, and the wine, bringing forth virgins." "From stones," *i. e.*, the common elements furnished by the wheat and grape, doth He command sacred food to be made, so that "none may be sent empty away."

On God's table, the altar at holy Mass, this Divine food is served, to stay our soul's hunger and keep the spark of divine life alive within us. But food does not benefit the dead. Hence, the most pressing need of souls dead in sin is pardon. We hunger for expiation, but are powerless without a divine mediator, one able and

willing to offer an atoning sacrifice of infinite worth in our behalf.

I. This our Lord does for us in the holy Mass, which is, therefore, not merely an act of supreme homage and thanksgiving, as we have seen, but an atoning or expiating sacrifice as well. Atonement is the third main end, or purpose, of the Mass. The fall gave a new character to sacrifice: that of satisfying the justice of God outraged by sin. Had man remained guiltless and guileless, simple offerings in recognition of God's sovereignty would have sufficed; but sin requires expiation. Hence, there grew up, side by side with peace and thank offerings, expiatory or sin offerings. Men have ever felt, as we feel to-day, that law, when broken, must be vindicated, and revolt against the supreme power of God atoned for. The offense is measured not by the condition of the offender, but by the rank of the one offended; hence the awful consequences of sin and its enduring penalty, if not repented of and pardoned. "The wages of sin is death." The very abuse of sacrifice, the hideous offerings of hecatombs of innocent human victims, even, are a tacit acknowledgment of men's just estimate of sin and the need of adequate atonement. It is all very well for optimists to speak lightly of sin and rail at the substitution of victims for it; but we know what it cost the innocent "Lamb of God" on Calvary; and daily inflicts on others, not the sinner, to think that it can be easily remedied. Atonement may be only, as some say, *at-one-ment* with God; but how reach this union, or rather reunion? It is solely by the one atoning Sacrifice on the Cross, of Him, Who "was offered because He willed it." "Who was bruised for our sins"; for "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him" (Is. liii, 5).

This offering of His is continued down the ages by way of application to individual souls. Generation after generation passes away, each reaping by turn the fruits of the Sacrifice of Calvary in the

"harvest of the Mass." The Cross and the Mass are but one atoning sacrifice, differing only in the mode of offering. The agony, the mangling torments and cruel death of the Victim on the blood-stained altar of the Cross, ceased at the death of Christ, "Who, therefore, dieth now no more"; but the clean oblation and mystic death of the cenacle remain in the Mass. It cannot, consequently, be too often repeated that holy Mass is more than a mere service of prayer and Communion; or a joint offering of adoration and thanksgiving. It is all this, and more. It is a true, real expiating Sacrifice, applying the fruits of Calvary to the remission of sin both for the "quick and the dead." "If any one saith that the Sacrifice of the Mass is not a *propitiatory* sacrifice, let him be anathema," says the Council of Trent.

Propitiation, or atonement for sin, is a leading note of the Mass both in speech and action. In the Kyrie, the Gloria, the Memento, both for the living and the dead, a pleading cry for pardon and mercy is heard; so that God, justly offended by sin, may be appeased. As in the old law, the sacrificing priest used to lay hands on the victim of a sin offering to indicate that it was to bear the sins of the people; so in the Mass, the priest, just before the words of consecration, stretches his hands over the sacred species to symbolize the transfer of our sins to the "Lamb of God," that is soon to lie on our altars, "as it were slain," the Lamb "that taketh away the sins of the world." Our Lord, in short, offers Himself not only as a peace offering of homage and thanksgiving to a bountiful God, but as a sin-offering to an *offended* One. Not that fresh merit and atonement are created in and by each Mass, but those won by the Cross are applied. Neither does the Mass replace, and much less dispense with, the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, the main direct sources of cleansing grace. The action of the Mass is not

sacramental, but sacrificial, *i. e.*, it does not affect the soul by direct contact, but indirectly, by increasing and intensifying actual grace. It thus secures for those present, or those for whom it is offered, light and other helps that gently lead them near to God. Hence it does not directly remit sin, but secures this result, indirectly, by obtaining the grace of perfect contrition. In comparison with sacramental energy it acts more as a health-giving atmosphere than as food and medicine. The atoning power or grace of the Mass produces in the soul the same bracing and tonic effects that sunshine or the pure air of the hills and the sea does upon the body. All, saints and sinners, benefit by the Mass. Even for an impenitent sinner to go to Mass is like an invalid going to a health resort. The very air is healing. Indeed, sinners who go to Mass of their own accord can hardly be called hopeless sinners. They are sure to put their house in order spiritually sooner or later. For, where holy Mass is said grace abounds. The very atmosphere of the place is electric with actual grace. If faith is left, even bad Catholics who keep our Lord company in holy Mass, like the penitent thief, die strangely well. For, as in life, virtue still goes forth from Him.

We may say that the Mass in itself is of infinite worth, and infallibly so as a sacrifice of homage and thanksgiving to almighty God; but as regards the benefit it bestows on man, in the way of petition and expiation of sin, or remission of the punishment due to sin, its application, as we shall see later, is limited and finite. Much depends on its acceptance by God, and the spiritual condition, merits and capacity of those for whom it is offered. It is comforting and inspiring, however, to know that we possess in the holy Mass a great divine ordinance, by which God is adequately adored and thanked, and the souls of men benefited both on earth and in purgatory.

A last word on the aspect of Mass, mainly dealt with to-day. If, unaided, we are powerless to adore and thank God worthily and adequately, how much less can we fully atone to the divine Majesty outraged by sin? In all three ways, without the Mass, we are hopelessly insolvent. But infinite mercy has found a way out: Christ our Lord becomes our sin-offering, and pleads on an equality in our behalf with an offended God. Kings, and prelates, and rulers have appeared in sackcloth and ashes, and with halters round their necks, to appease human justice and ask pardon for their people. In holy Mass "the King of kings and Lord of lords" does the same, mystically, for us. Bound and gagged, livid with bruises and crowned with thorns, He mounted the altar of the Cross on Calvary. There He lay fastened, the victim of sin. This same act of atonement is mystically repeated in the solemn function of the Mass, which carries on the great tragedy of the Cross.

Shall we do nothing personally in atonement for our sins that made our Saviour a victim? Remember that His full and complete act of expiation does but accentuate our need and duty to "fill up what is wanting," by way of application, "to sufferings of Christ." "Do penance, therefore, or you shall all likewise perish." The Lent we enter to-day reminds us of this duty. Let us resolve, therefore, not to neglect penitential good works, as, *e. g.*, hearing daily Mass during this holy season. Let us work and suffer by way of atonement and in union with our suffering Lord. If we cannot embrace His Cross with gladness, as the saints, we can at least submit to it in a spirit of holy resignation.

Second Sunday in Lent

The Mass a Great Prayer of Petition

"This is my well-beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—These self same words were said of Him around whose lowly throne and tabernacle we cluster in holy prayer to-day. He, whose face on Thabor "did shine as the sun, and whose garments became white as snow"; and to the truth of whose mission God Himself bore witness, in presence of Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets, is before us at this moment. Though no mysterious voice pierces the clouds, nor is there any perceptible transfiguration observed in the elements under which He shrouds His Majesty, yet do we feel sure, on the warrant of Divine faith, that "God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" can and does fill our minds with such firm belief as "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II. Cor. iv, 6).

We hold with the certainty of faith, that, every day at the ringing of the Elevation bell in holy Mass, there is a mystic transfiguration far transcending that of Thabor, the change of the substance of bread and wine into the glorified Body of "the Lamb that was slain," and who now reigns above. Sense fails to grasp this mystery; but faith comes to the rescue, and in God's name says, "Hear ye Him." Our Lord Himself, and none other, made it known, and still "helps our unbelief." When He is raised up for our adoration in holy Mass we see the transfigured Christ, the oracle of the new law, the

successor of Moses and Elias, the embodiment, or rather fulfilment, of the law and the prophets.

I. Now, what is our Lord's work in the Host? He pleads and prays for us incessantly. We deem it hard, perhaps, to spend a whole hour each week in union with Him praying in the garden. We think it a heavy sacrifice to get to Mass every day during Lent; but our Lord, the "King of glory," takes upon Himself our task of perpetual prayer. He spends the whole day and live-long night as our mediator, at holy Mass, and in the recesses of the tabernacle. We have said that our Lord carries out the four great ends of sacrifice in the Mass by adoring and thanking God in our name; and atoning and praying for us sinners. To-day we deal with petition for help, the fourth main purpose of the holy Sacrifice. The Mass thus glorifies God by rendering Him due homage and thanksgiving; and benefits man by gaining for him pardon of sin and grace in answer to prayer.

Prayer is of the essence of divine worship, and finds its highest expression in the Mass. The four purposes of the Sacrifice—adoration, thanksgiving, atonement and petition—are focused in the prayer of Christ, or rather in the prayer and action of Him, as our high priest, combined. For there is no action in the Mass proper without its attendant form of words, *i. e.*, prayer.

The daily Sacrifice, therefore, is the great standing prayer of the Church. Like the divine office, itself a sort of remote preparation for Mass on the part of the priest, Mass ascends as sweet incense in the sight of God "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." It is a mighty function of prayer and work that brings men to the throne of God on earth, in masses, to pray, not in weak isolation, but in powerful union, for their own many personal needs, and those of the Church and the world at large. "Where two

or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst," is a saying of our Lord, more applicable to holy Mass than any other form of joint prayer whatsoever. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as private Mass. There must be at least a server to represent the people and the Church. The priest neither acts nor prays therein in his private capacity. He is a public minister, deputed to discharge a public rite.

Day and night the great action mounts to the throne of God as a prayer for mercy and help, in favor of the living and the dead. Happily, too, it is a pure and clean offering of what is most pleasing, and which no human unworthiness can mar or hinder. As well stay the kindly light, or the genial showers on their way to earth, as to stop the Mass as it mounts to heaven.

To a devout assistant the holy Mass is an unceasing course of sublime prayer, intensified, elevated and quickened by the accompanying ritual. Thus the whole movement of the Sacrifice is a call to pray earnestly, eagerly, and constantly for ourselves and others. In the Collects, *e. g.,* we are invited to pray for the common needs of the Church; in the Offertory, for our own personal wants. At the Lavabo, we crave for the soul's primary need, symbolized by the priest's action, *viz.,* purity of heart. In the great intercession for the living and that for the dead, we name our loved ones in detail, in whose welfare we are interested; in our Lord's own prayer, the Pater, we sum up all our needs, public and private, of soul and body; in the "Agnus Dei," we appeal directly to the Lamb of God, both victim and priest, to have mercy on us and grant us peace. In fact, the prayer of petition is never off our lips in the Mass, thus giving to the Sacrifice the character that now engages our attention.

What makes the Mass so forceful in the way of petitions is that it is the solemn prayer and pleading of Christ Himself. And, surely,

if the prayer of any just man avails much with God, if prayer, by its very importunity, forces a hearing, what will not the prayer of petition, offered through Christ, our High Priest, effect in holy Mass, His own divine ordinance? If, when present in visible form amongst us, He could say to His Father, "I know that Thou hearest Me always" (John xi, 42), and who, "In the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears was heard for His reverence" (Heb. vi, 7), how much more effectually now, when in holy Mass He assumes the garb of the pleader, the mediator, the priest. For it is in the Mass, as St. Augustine says, that "Christ prays for us as our priest, prays for us as our head, and is prayed to by us as our God." Hence, we find that to prop up and strengthen our own prayers, they are addressed to God in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. The altar, on which holy Mass is said, and our petitions offered to God, represents the "golden altar" St. John saw in vision, *i. e.*, "Jesus Christ, the living altar of God." To the angel of Sacrifice, invoked in the Mass, "is given much incense," "that He should offer up the prayers of all saints upon the *golden altar,* which is before the throne of God" (Apoc. viii, 3).

The Mass thus becomes a vast mine or storehouse of divine wealth, the Church's treasury, to which all have free access. There are neither locks, nor keys, nor mining rights. We can join our petitions with Christ our High Priest, in the Mass, as easily as we can breathe the air, or bask in the sunshine. The holy Sacrifice, in its four main aspects, is as open to all as the sea that washes our shores.

There is no worthy object, no righteous petition, that we may not present to God in the Mass. We may pray in it for all, for whom Christ died; we may ask all blessings spiritual and temporal, crave for protection against all evils of soul and body. Prayer is powerful at all times; but its force with God is strengthened and intensified

beyond measure in the Mass. When the Church is in danger, she flies to the Mass. Special prayers are inserted by her chief pastors to ward off evil and bring down God's blessing. The Collects of the Missal or Mass Book, the most touching, the most tender and most impressive prayers in existence, are all prayers of petition.

No doubt, as in the case of all form of prayer, certain conditions are obviously required, both on the part of the person who asks, and the favors sought for; but, as in other cases, if "we ask and receive not," it is because we ask amiss. No prayer, however, offered in the Mass, is lost. Its fruit comes back to us in numberless hidden ways. The very state of mind that an even apparently unanswered prayer should engender is a grace. One thing we may be sure of, and it is that if light, grace and healing do not reach our soul in answer to prayer at Mass, the fault rests with ourselves, not with the Mass. What better time, place and opportunity to present our petitions to God, than in union with our Lord, His Church, His priest, and His assembled people? "Union is strength," in prayer as in everything else.

Let us then rouse our confidence in prayer when we approach so near the throne of grace in holy Mass.

Third Sunday in Lent

Fruits of the Mass

"When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—Christ our eucharistic Lord is "the strong man armed," who has cast out Satan from the world's temples of worship, and replaced the sacrifices to idols by the pure, clean oblation of the holy Mass. He is Master in His own house, the Church, and, therefore, are all things in peace within its borders. Strife against error and vice, in all their forms, reigns, it is true, on the frontiers of His kingdom; but within there is unity and peace. He is with her not merely as God, but as God-man. Wherever a new church is opened, an altar raised, Mass said and the Blessed Sacrament reserved, there is "the strong man armed keeping His court."

And yet, how true it is that "God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the strong." The tiny wafer, shining in the monstrance, or closed up in the ciborium, appears the weakest and frailest thing possible, and so it was, till God's word fell upon it in holy Mass, and now it shrouds the mighty King, the "strong man armed," who has conquered sin and death. Thus, our eucharistic Lord is one of the fruits of the Mass. What we glean or gather from the holy Sacrifice, in the way of fruit, will, therefore, be the subject of our short address during part of the "Holy Hour" to-day.

I. Increase and multiplication, fecundity in short, marks all that God, our Father Almighty, hath planted. There are trees still bearing fruit some thousands of years old. Earth pours her bountiful

harvest year by year into our laps. But the rich "Harvest of the Mass" never ceases. The fruits of the holy Sacrifice, ripe and mellow, may be reaped every day and hour all the year round.

How to plant, gather and apply to our own personal wants the fruits of holy Mass, our Lord taught us by saying Himself the first Mass at the Last Supper, and binding His Church to a perpetual continuation of His ordinance. "This do in remembrance of Me."

Holy Mass, remember, is no empty rite, the fruits of which depend entirely on the state of mind or inward disposition of the actors and onlookers, but a real self-acting sacrifice, though only relative to, and representative of, that of the Cross. It carries down the fruits of Calvary in a clean and bloodless manner till the end of time. The rearing of the Cross was the planting of a tree, the building an altar, that no efforts of Satan, or his agents, can uproot or pull down. The Mass is a tree that is never bare of fruit, it is an altar on which incense ever burns, and from which sacrifice ever rises; it is a fountain, the waters of which never, never cease to flow. It creates an atmosphere that fills with renewed life and strength those who breathe it.

Though the fruits of the Mass are in a sense infinite and inexhaustible, their application to us is finite and limited. Boundless sources of energy are limited by the capacity and condition of the receiver, and even fail to act altogether in certain cases. There is no limit, *e. g.*, to the heat of the sun, the water of the ocean, the fruits of the earth, and the wealth of our mines; and yet thousands perish through cold, hunger, thirst and want. So with the fruits of the Mass. Though all are free to use and draw from them, comparatively few benefit by them. Owing to this, though each Mass in itself is of infinite worth, yet the Church allows the holy Sacrifice to be said repeatedly, or even offered perpetually, for the same

intention. The acceptance of the Mass by God, in the way of suffrage, man's power of resisting grace, and other factors, make the application of the fruits of the Mass, to the benefit of men, a matter of obscurity and uncertainty. This holds true only for what are called the primary and special fruits of the Mass; because the general or *common* fruits of the Mass are of priceless worth, and cannot be hindered by any act or perversity of man. The Mass, *e. g.*, gives the earth its eucharistic Lord, and what tongue can tell its value. Furthermore, it makes adequate provision for divine worship, in the homage and thanksgiving offered therein, to almighty God. In addition to this, Christ pleads therein, with outstretched arms, for the pardon of our sins, and the bestowal of grace in answer to prayer. None are shut out from these general fruits of the Mass. Priests and people, rich and poor, the faithful and the unbeliever, the living and the dead, share in its world-wide benefits. Like the wind and the rain, they fall to the just, and to the unjust alike, according to their capacity and the good pleasure of God. We may say of the Mass, in this respect, what Solomon says of the sun, "Its going out is from the end of heaven, and there is none that can hide himself from its heat." The *faithful,* and those present at Mass, share more abundantly, however, in the common fruits of the holy Sacrifice than others. The sun and the rain do not benefit all alike; to do so, we must come within range of their action.

Again, there is a special, or, as some call it, a *most special* fruit accruing to the priest who says Mass, and which cannot be transferred to others. Though his office is but secondary and ministerial, yet he is not a blind, mechanical instrument, like a tool, or an organ, in the hand of a workman or a musician. He is a free, intelligent self-determining agent, discharging a lofty function in which mind and will are employed, and which must produce certain effects or

results in his soul, that it is not within his power to alienate or share with others, any more than a teacher can help benefiting personally by the lesson he gives. There is finally what is called the principal, or more special, fruit, which the priest may determine, and so accord to others. It goes to those for whom the priest is to say Mass. In early days it was usual for the people to bring offerings of bread and wine and other gifts for the altar, the maintenance of the clergy and the poor. They who did so were rightly supposed to have a special claim on the fruits of the Mass. Offerings in kind, like tithes, have died out in most places; but, instead, stipends are given to the priests who say Mass, not as the price of the Mass, which would be the sin of simony, but as a contribution toward the support of the clergy, since it is but fair that "they who preach the Gospel and serve the altar should live by it."

Priests are debarred by their holy calling from seeking lucrative worldly posts; and it is just that the time, prayer and anxiety devoted to the due celebration of the holy mysteries should place them beyond undue concern as regards their temporal needs. Long years of training, certain gifts and qualities, both of heart and mind, and searching inquiry as to character, go to fitting a Levite to stand at the altar, and thus instrumentally secure for us the fruits of the Mass.

The fruits of the Mass are the fruits of redemption brought to our very doors. The very branches of the tree of the Cross bend down, so to say, in the Mass that we may pluck and eat. What Christ earned on Calvary is stored up and served out in the Mass.

Were there in the world to-day, as in Eden of old, a tree of life laden with fruit for all, that should banish disease and death, what throngs would fill the highways leading to it. The mere remote hope of gaining temporary relief brings people in crowds to shrines

and health resorts. And yet, in each parish, within sight and hearing of our homes, perhaps, the new Tree of life bends its branches to the ground. Where holy Mass is said, there is the tree of the Cross planted, and its fruit dispensed to those who would gather and eat. There is the Food given out that builds up not the perishable life of the body, but the undying life of the soul. Let no trifling excuse then keep you from holy Mass. No health resort of renown, no healing spring, no invigorating atmosphere, no shrine even of our Lady and the saints, can rival the Mass which brings to our altar Christ, the great physician of the soul.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

I. Mass as a Liturgy. II. Vestments

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—The hungry crowds faint for food; and at our Lord's magical words the few loaves and fishes multiply till all are filled, and the very fragments far exceed what He first blessed. Though less striking, a similar marvel takes place in a bountiful harvest. But a greater wonder than either occurs every day in the multiplication of our Lord's own Body at Consecration in holy Mass. Words, gifted with divine power, are uttered over the few particles of bread laid on the altar, and, lo! the vast multitudes who throng our churches for holy Communion are fed to repletion with the Bread of Life. And yet "All do eat the same spiritual food, and all do drink the same spiritual drink, the one Body and Blood of the Lord." But the divine Manna is not thereby exhausted. The "basket" of the ciborium is still left over, replenished in the tabernacle.

Just as seeking and preparing its daily bread is the world's main occupation, so it is that of the Church. All the members of each family meet in peace and union at the common table. Their whole life circles round their meals; for food is the body's first need. In like manner the life of the Church is the preparing and making provision for the soul's great spiritual banquet in holy Mass. This is the main central act, function and care of the Church, to see that the souls of men get their daily Bread at daily Mass, if possible.

Like the children of this world who wash and dress for table, the children of the Church cleanse their souls and put on the garb of grace before sitting down at the table of the Lord. Daily Mass is the great sacrificial meal of the family of God, "the great supper" of the Gospel, to which all are invited.

I. We have dwelt upon the Sacrifice of the new law in its doctrinal aspect. It now remains for us to treat of it as a liturgy; *i. e.*, of the manner of carrying out the great eucharistic rite in certain fixed words and actions. The word liturgy, originally meaning public work or service, is narrowed down now-a-days to the method of conducting holy Mass—the main public work or service of the Church. Around the core or kernel of the Mass, dating from the Last Supper, and consisting of the essential, fixed and unchangeable parts, *viz.*, Consecration and Communion with a hymn or act of thanksgiving, like our preface and a central prayer similar to the canon, have grown up and clustered many beautiful prayers and ceremonies, forming the various rites and liturgies, under which it is lawful to celebrate. Even in apostolic times the celebration of the holy Mysteries had grown into a very elaborate rite. For the Church, though bound to cling fast to the ordinance of Christ in the institution of the Mass, holds herself free to modify, or even add to, the accompanying ritual. There has been no change, however, in her ceremonial of the Mass for centuries.

As the Mass is her most sacred trust, the Church has ever used the most scrupulous care in maintaining this holy rite in all its integrity, and surrounding its observance with all possible reverence, pomp and splendor. This is best seen in High Mass, of which ordinary Low Mass is but a shortening and of much later growth.

Religion, be it remembered, is not a frigid enforcement of abstract truth and concrete duty. The God whom we worship thereby is not merely divine truth and divine law, He is, also, divine beauty. Art, the expression of the beautiful in poetry, music and architecture, to say nothing of dress and ceremonial, is made to minister to religion in her supreme, central and most sacred act, holy Mass. Mass, after all, is the coming of the King to His royal banquet. Can anything be too grand, or beautiful, or elaborate on such an occasion? Better, in our humble way, be wasteful Magdalen, who loved Him, than critical and penurious Judas, who betrayed Him.

Here in the West we mostly use the Roman rite, one of the oldest, most beautiful and most devotional of all liturgies; and the one most likely to outlive and supersede all others. The broad outlines of the Low Mass, as said in this rite, will furnish us with matter for a few addresses during our prayer of the "Holy Hour." To understand the Mass well, is to love and be devout to our Lord in the holy Eucharist. Each word, ceremony and action of the Mass has a meaning, a history and an application. Many of them date from the cenacle and the catacombs, and all contribute to make us realize the grandeur, holiness and importance of holy Mass, tending thereby to impress upon us the duty of assisting at this venerable rite with due attention and devotion.

II. A word or two, ere we part, on the sacred vestments or distinctive robes worn by the priest during the holy Sacrifice. Before putting them on the priest, having previously said Matins and Lauds as a remote, and certain fixed psalms and prayers as an immediate preparation, washes his hands, uttering at the same time a prayer for purity of heart, a needful quality in one who is getting ready to personate Christ in offering sacrifice. The hands are a symbol of work, and both the priest and ourselves, co-offerers in the Mass,

are reminded of the duty of cleansing our good works and especially the eminently perfect work of Sacrifice from all taint of sinful, selfish or unworthy motives.

Though in early ages the vestments worn at Mass did not differ from the dress used in society at large, they came by degrees to assume a sacred and symbolic character. It was always understood they should be clean and speckless and above the common, like our Sunday clothes to-day. Hence, St. Jerome, speaking to or of his fellow clerics in the fifth century, says, "We should not enter the Holy of Holies in every-day garments soiled by the common use of life, but with clean consciences and in clean attire handle the mysteries of the Lord."

As the Church emerged into the light from the mines and catacombs, and worldly fashions got changed, the vestments, still keeping the old forms, grew rich, distinctive and restricted by degrees to use only in sacred functions.

At present the rules regulating the form, color, material and blessing of vestments are very strict and rigidly enforced. This gives them a sacred character and enhances the Mass. They are made of silk and linen, two of the finest fabrics furnished by nature, one from the animal, the other from the vegetable, kingdom. As far as may be, the Church, in her choice of sacred robes, is not behind Aaron and his sons who, in their sacrificial functions, wore "gold, and violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed and linen" (Exod. xxviii, 5).

Formerly, vestments were all of one color, pure white. Now, in the Roman liturgy, five different colors are used: white, red, green, purple and black. These colors speak a language of their own and indicate the character of the feast or mystery honored each day. Thus, red is the symbol of fire and blood, and is worn on

Pentecost, feasts of the Passion, and of the apostles and martyrs who witnessed to Christ, even to the shedding of blood. Purple, a mourning color, speaks of penance, and is used in the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent, and on Ember and supplication days, reminding us of our duty "to take up our cross" and to "do penance," lest we "all likewise perish." Green, the color of nature, is worn on all Sundays and on days when no special feast or mystery is kept. It symbolizes the leaf of a good plain life, with its promise of future flower and fruit. Black is worn on Good Fridays and in Masses for the dead, when the Church mourns for the death of her Lord and of her own children. White, symbol of purity and joy, characterizes feasts and mysteries of joy and gladness, and is, therefore, worn on days set aside to honor our Lady, confessors and virgins, as well as the joyful events or mysteries of our Lord's life.

Time does not permit us to dwell on the many lessons suggested by the symbolism of vestments and their color. Let the robes of the priest at Mass, however, remind us of the many virtues that should deck the soul as a raiment. We, too, when we draw near the altar in holy Communion, must wear the wedding robe of divine grace, given us in Baptism and washed clean again in Penance, if ever soiled by sin. The changing colors used at Mass tell us that we must always offer sacrifice to God under all changing moods, both of mind and nature, from somber black to dazzling white. Whatever circumstances color life in its varying hues, whether joy or sorrow, sickness or health, wealth or poverty, let us at all times, like holy Church in the Mass, "praise the Lord and sacrifice to His name."

Passion Sunday

Vestments

"But Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The purple hangings you see around you in the church to-day, remind you that Passion-tide has returned, and that it is the duty of us all to follow the sinless Sufferer, more nearly than ever, on His way to Calvary. But though our Lord is thereby veiled to sight even in His very images, yet to "His own" He ever stands forth revealed in faith. To them, whether on Thabor or on Calvary, He is, as to Peter, "Christ the Son of the living God."

The sacred Host that comes to us in the Mass, like the veiled crucifix, both conceals and reveals our Lord's presence. He hides Himself under its forms, and yet by these very forms we know Him to be there—body, soul and divinity.

His life on earth is mirrored in the Eucharist. Indeed, the story told in the Gospel of the day is the story of the Mass in many a land. You have heard Him called a Samaritan and a devil by His own people, and how they tried to stone Him for asserting His divine origin, sinlessness, and ability to give eternal life.

How often do we hear the Mass called a "vain device," and the Host an idol, by whole nations once Catholic, who, in days gone by, rose up in satanic fury to stone Him therein, and thus cast out the "Holy of holies," from their shrines and "temples." How many noble buildings, vying in splendor with the temple of Jerusalem, from the Golden Horn to the Thames, are now mere empty tombs,

dead piles of architecture, with no soul or meaning in them, because the altars were pulled down and the great Sacrifice offered there no longer. The people rose up against Christ in the Mass; and "He hid Himself, and went out from their temples."

What happens to whole peoples may happen to individual souls who lose their hold on Christ in holy Mass and Communion. They give up passing a "holy hour" with Him there, the light of faith gradually fades away, and He leaves the temples of their souls. Two things are needful to keep the lamp of the sanctuary alight within us: knowledge and love of our eucharistic Lord. Both are fostered in our prayer of the "Holy Hour." To know Him well, we must study the Mass in all its bearings, for it is the Mass that brings Him to us.

We have seen that, in order to welcome the "King of Glory" to His throne, on the altar, and in the Tabernacle, the officiating priest at holy Mass robes himself in a special garb we call the sacred vestments. Just as the Church often changed heathen temples, or secular houses, into hallowed shrines, so has she turned the ordinary dress of a Roman citizen into the sacred garments worn at holy Mass, and sanctified them by use and blessing. They are, therefore, to be handled and spoken of with respect.

Those worn at Mass are six in number: Amice, Alb, Girdle, Maniple, Stole and Chasuble, each with a symbolism of its own referring to some event in our Lord's passion, or a virtue that should adorn the soul of priest and hearer.

The Amice, a square or oblong piece of linen, with cross in middle, which the priest kisses, is the first put on. It is the most recent of all, and was formerly used as a sort of hood to protect head and neck, a form it may be seen to assume in the case of the members of certain religious orders, when about to begin Mass. Symbolically,

it represents the cloth wherewith our Lord was blindfolded in His Passion. Whilst putting it on his head, the priest prays God to grant him "the helmet of salvation" against all satanic foes, a prayer in which we should all earnestly join, as who does not need the armor of God against the forces of evil?

The Alb, the oldest and most significant of all the liturgical garments, is the ancient linen tunic, lengthened to the feet, so that the wearer becomes, so to say, "clad in whiteness," the emblem of purity. A similar linen robe was always used in sacrifice by priests, both Jewish and pagan, a custom upheld in the celebration of the eucharistic Sacrifice from early times.

As an emblem of the Passion, the Alb represents the white robe of scorn and derision, in which Incarnate Wisdom was clad by Herod, and sent back to Pilate as a fool. In putting it on, the priest prays, as we should do, that God may "cleanse his heart, and make it white in the Blood of the Lamb."

The Girdle binds the Alb round the waist; and, as the prayer said by the priest indicates, is a symbol of the continence and self-restraint, so necessary in a priest, and indeed, in all who would walk worthy of their Christian calling. Impurity, the violation of the temple of God, is a loathsome vice in all; and in none more so than in those dedicated by vow to the service of the altar. As an emblem of the Passion, the Girdle reminds us of the cords that bound our Lord, and the scourges that mangled His pure and virginal flesh.

The Maniple, worn over the left arm, was originally a handkerchief or napkin, used to wipe the face and eyes, after toil and exertion. It has thus come to symbolize penance and sorrow, as the prayer used in putting it on points out, yet with the added hope of eternal joy. What more helpful than to realize that if, in a true Christ-like spirit, "we sow in tears, we shall one day reap in joy."

In the Passion, the Maniple reminds us of the cords wherewith our Lord's wrists were tied during the scourging and crowning with thorns.

The Stole, a distinctly pastoral garb, with a long history attached to it, and now worn as a badge of authority by bishops, priests, and deacons, is folded across the breast in holy Mass, when said by a priest. It represents the cords wherewith our Lord was bound to the pillar; and, as worn over the shoulders, folded in form of a cross, it reminds us also of the instrument of our Saviour's death, pointing to our duty of bearing the yoke or burden, *i. e.*, the Cross of Christ. This is the only means by which we can recover "the stole or robe of immortality," which the priest prays for in putting it on.

The Chasuble, now the principal vestment used at Mass, and formerly covering the whole body, has undergone many changes ere reaching its present form. The cross, usually worked on the back, reminds us of our Lord, represented by the priest, carrying the weight of our sins, to restore us to grace. The Chasuble symbolizes also the purple rag thrown over our Lord's shoulders in the Passion, when stripped of His own seamless garment. It is, besides, an emblem of many virtues, but chiefly charity. The prayer said on putting it on associates it with the yoke of Christ.

To lovers of our sacramental Lord, everything in the Mass, as I said, is interesting and significant. Be not of those who speak slightingly of the mere externals of religion. The outward may mask, but it also reveals, the inward. Ornaments, and ceremonies, and dress have a deep meaning in the Mass, as elsewhere. The sacred vestments are meant to impress upon us that the priest divests himself of his own personality and puts on that of Christ. The divinity, it is said, was clad in the vesture of our humanity. Indeed, it is only through the visible and the external we behold God in this life.

Nature is the robe, or vesture, of God—the veil through which we perceive and realize his attributes, and come, in short, to know Him.

The sacred vestments, again, remind us of the need and duty of clothing our souls in the virtues they symbolize; and, above all, of keeping the white robe of Baptism—the wedding garment of divine grace—pure and spotless, that we may be found worthy to sit down at the royal table, in holy Mass, and feast on the Bread of angels. Our real worth and wealth, it is true, is character; but what, after all, is character, but the vesture of the soul—the various habits, be they virtues or vices, that the soul puts on, or off, during life.

A man's calling or standing in life is often known by his dress. His rank or position in the army, or navy, or the service of the state, is indicated by his garb. We are Christians. Christ is our King, our Lord, our Redeemer, our God. Let us wear His livery, never be ashamed outwardly to show what we inwardly believe of our Lord, in the Mass. "Put ye on, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ," a good motto to think of, and a lesson to bring away with us, from what has been said on the sacred vestments used at Mass.

Palm Sunday

"Behold, thy King cometh to thee."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—A meteor-like gleam of royalty falls on our Lord in the ovation accorded Him to-day; but it is only a bright flash in a long, dark and stormy night. The very people who acclaim Him King and Messias, will, ere long, cry out in frenzy for His Blood.

And yet He is King to-day in a deeper, truer, and more far-reaching sense than any ruler in this world. Every day of the year, nay, every hour of the day, His kingly sovereignty is recognized in holy Mass by adoring throngs. On all Sundays and feast days, in some part or other of His dominions, the scenes described in the Gospel are renewed. His faithful people of "every tongue, and tribe, and nation," go forth in crowds to strew flowers on His path, decorate His altars, and lay rich and costly garments at His feet, hailing with glad hosannas Him, "Who ever cometh in the name of the Lord."

Kings have palaces in various parts of their dominions, but our eucharistic King holds His court in every corner of His kingdom, and favors them all equally, be they gorgeous cathedrals in renowned and wealthy cities, or lowly huts in backwoods or deserts.

He is present in all, and receives His subjects on terms of unspeakable intimacy, without distinction of race, rank or color. To do this, "He empties Himself in the Mass, taking the form of a "servant," no, the form of food. To win our love, to come near and live with us, He shaped the sacrifice of the new law, destined to convey to us singly the fruits of redemption in the form of a sacrificial meal,

a royal banquet, became its victim, the more easily to give us, as He had promised, "His Body to eat and His Blood to drink" (John vi).

As at the last Supper, the sacrifice and the meal, the Mass and Communion go together. The Communion of the people is, in a manner, the complement of that of the priest. Both priest and people should vest or dress for holy Mass in a manner worthy of and becoming this royal banquet. In our last address we dwelt upon the vestments of the priest that give color, tone, beauty and splendor to the feast of the Mass. But a sacred banquet requires also sacred vessels and linen. The altar, like the table in a banqueting hall, has its cloth, its napkins, its cup and plate. A word or two, therefore, on these sacred vessels and linen will not be out of place to-day. Like the vestments, they have a humble origin, *viz.*, the requisite of a meal.

The Chalice is a holy cup; the Paten, the plate or dish; the Corporal, the tablecloth; and the Purificatory or Mundatory, the napkin of this hallowed meal. All are either consecrated or blessed, and thus set aside for the use of the altar. The priest, on vesting, carries them with him to the sanctuary when about to say Mass. Such is the reverence shown for all that comes into direct contact with the Host, that the linen and vessels used at Mass may not be touched, nor washed, save by clerics, in sacred orders. St. Paul's injunction that "everything be done decently and according to order," is enforced with unbending rigidity in the rubrics, or etiquette, so to say, to be observed at the King's banquet. A priest is as strictly bound to observe these rules when saying Mass in a log chapel of the Far West, as when celebrating in any of the great churches of New York or San Francisco; for the Mass, be it remembered, is a sacred deposit, the "last ordinance," the very will and testament of the

Lord; and, therefore, to be treated everywhere with the reverence due to a divine thing.

The Chalice is the cup serving to hold the wine for consecration in the Mass. The cup proper, as distinguished from the stand, should be gold, or at least silver gilt on the inside, a rule that applies to all the vessels of the altar coming into actual contact with the sacred Species. In early times chalices of glass, or wood, or horn, or in fact of almost any material, owing to poverty, were allowed. As was natural, when the Church grew freer, richer, and more influential, costly material and artistic workmanship became the rule. So early as A. D. 226, Pope Urban I. had all sacred vessels made of silver; and the main charge against the martyr St. Lawrence was that of selling the gold and silver altar vessels, to relieve the poor; sole motive, at all times, it may be observed, that can induce the Church to part with the costly treasures used in holy Mass.

When Communion was administered under two kinds, two other descriptions of Chalices were in use, baptismal and ministerial; the former, to give the Precious Blood to the newly baptised; the latter, to ordinary communicants.

Chalices are consecrated by a bishop, and may not be handled by any but those in sacred orders.

The Chalice is often used symbolically for the tomb, in which our Lord was buried. It often means, in Scripture, suffering; in most cases, one's portion or one's lot in life.

The Paten, or plate, on which the sacred Host is placed, was ever associated with the Chalice from time immemorial, and, like the Chalice, is consecrated with Chrism by the bishop. It must be of the same metal, and gilt, if not gold, on the hollow side. Formerly large ministerial Patens were used in giving holy Communion, since replaced by the Ciborium, a sort of covered Chalice, in which the

blessed Sacrament is reserved. In early ages a particle or particles were kept for the sick, in a dove-shaped golden receptacle, named Pyx, hanging from the top of a canopy, called Baldacchino, or Ciborium, that served to cover the altar. The word Pyx is now given to the little portable box used in carrying the blessed Sacrament to the sick; and Ciborium to the larger vessel, described above. Both Pyx and Ciborium must be of metal and not of wood, glass, or ivory; and gilt, at least, on the inside. They receive a blessing, not consecration, and when in use, must be covered with a white silk veil.

Though not directly connected with the Mass, mention may be made of the latest, largest, and most ornate of the sacred vessels used to receive the blessed Sacrament. This is the Monstrance, which serves to hold and display the Host during the solemn rites of Benediction and Exposition. The Lunette, in which the blessed Sacrament is placed, must be of gold, or silver gilt.

We thus see that from the earliest times the Church has spared no effort to make the sacred vessels used at holy Mass, and in the cult of the Eucharist coming to us through the Mass, worthy of their sacred purposes. Even so far back as the days of St. Augustine of Hippo, the holy doctor speaks of two golden and six silver Chalices, exhumed from the crypt of the church of Cirta, which must have been of great antiquity even then. Priceless treasures of art have come down to us from past ages, to show that however poor in worldly good generally, the Church deemed nothing too good or costly to be used in the great Sacrifice, at which even angels veil their faces in reverent awe.

The veneration in which sacred vessels are universally held brings forcibly home to us a very helpful lesson. We shudder, perhaps, at the bare thought of profaning or turning even to common uses

whatever comes in contact with the altar. We read with awe of the weird handwriting on the wall at Balthasar's feast, recording the doom of the king and his fellow revellers, who had profaned the sacred vessels serving in the temple worship, by use in their orgies. But what if a similar fate befell those that are employed in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If the type was sacred to the Lord, what of the reality?

Let us not forget, however, that the Chalice, the Paten, and the Ciborium are but the temporary resting-place of the Lord's Body and Blood, till they find a permanent home in our own breasts. We are all living Chalices, vessels of election, consecrated with holy unction like to them, and destined to receive the new Manna, descending on our altars at holy Mass. The gold, and silver, and beauty, and excellence of the material resting-place symbolize what our hearts should be. Like the Chalice, whatsoever "the outside of the cup may be," we should be "of gold" within.

In the beautiful legend of the quest of the Holy Grail, or Chalice, used by our Lord at the last Supper, the knight who volunteered to search for it had to be spotlessly pure and chaste in thought, word, and act. Such, too, should our souls be, on venturing to touch not simply the Chalice and the Paten, but their holy contents. We are not called upon to undertake any long, dangerous or romantic journey to find the Holy Grail; we have but to visit any church where holy Mass is said, and there we shall find the real divine Presence that made the cup used by Christ at the last Supper holy and hallowed.

As we cleanse and adorn our person, and use clean and becoming garments in sitting down to table with the great ones of the earth, let us be no less careful when invited to the divine banquet of the Mass. But, above all, we must not forget that what God mainly

looks for in His guests is spotless purity of heart. Without this we are no better than the whited sepulchers to which our Lord compared the Scribes and Pharisees.

The rich shining vestments, the speckless linen, and the gold and silver vessels used at holy Mass, are but so many tongues appealing to us, to be within, in the sight of God, what they seem or ought to seem without, in the eyes of men. For, "the beauty of the King's daughter (*i. e., the soul*) is within."

Easter Sunday

"Behold the place where they laid Him."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Unlike the holy women who ran before the dawn to feast their eyes on the dead body of their Lord, we ever find on our altars not the dead, but the living and glorified body of Christ. He comes to us to-day in holy Mass and Communion, not in the gloom and coldness of the grave, but in all the light, and warmth, and glory of the Resurrection, to flood our souls with Easter peace and joy. But, though the marks of the five wounds do "now shine as the sun," yet they remind us of what He suffered to win for us the inheritance that is ours to-day. The altar, ablaze with light and decked with flowers, and the crucifix above it, tell us of the cruel altar of the Cross on which He redeemed the world, for the Passion still lives in the Mass. The same tragic sacrifice offered on Calvary is bloodlessly carried on therein, till the work of redemption is complete. The fruits of the Cross are daily reaped in the Mass. The sacrificial table whereon they lie is never empty or bare. "We have an altar, of which they may not eat, who serve the tabernacle" (Heb. xiii, 10).

We have spoken of the sacred vessels used in the banquet of the Mass; to-day we shall say a few words on the altar, or sacred table of sacrifice, on which these vessels are used.

When the priest is vested, he takes the Chalice, covered with veil and burse, and ascends the altar. The word altar, means then something high, or raised above the surrounding level. Our first instinct on entering a church is to look round for the altar.

Wherever raised, it is the main or central point to which all parts converge, and which dominates the whole building, sanctuary, nave, porch, and aisles. There may be several altars; but each is supreme in its own part, whilst the high altar overlooks all. The altar, then, is the very heart of the church, its soul and center. All other parts lead to, or are grouped around it. Indeed, our churches are built to hold, shelter, and protect the altar, or altars, they enshrine; for it is on the altar that the one supreme act of homage, reserved to God alone, the rite of Sacrifice, may be offered. Prayer or other forms of divine worship may be said anywhere; but Mass, the one sole Sacrifice of the new law, only on an altar. It is an altar, which, like the stone of Bethel, makes of every spot on earth "a house of God" and "gate of heaven." The altar-stone is the boundary mark of God's kingdom. According as it is pushed forward or recedes, the Church advances, or falls back. For the altar means to us "Emmanuel," "God with us in Christ," locally and personally, not in one spot or at one time, but "all days, even to the end of the world." What thoughts and associations the word awakens in a prayerful and reverent mind! What a story could be woven round the little wooden altar, still preserved in Rome, on which St. Peter is believed to have said Mass! For the history of the altar is the story of the Mass; and the story of the Mass is the story of the kingdom of God in all lands. Nay, more; to trace the story of the altar is to trace the history of religion from the beginning. We appeal to, and justly, the existence of shrines and temples amongst all nations as a proof that men, as a body, ever worshiped the Deity, and felt the need and duty of religion; but in reality we should appeal to altars. For long before a temple or shrine was raised altars smoked with sacrifice on the hills and in the forests. To build an altar was the first rude attempt to express publicly and externally, by a rite offered only to

Deity, the obligation of worshiping God by sacrifice. Temples, and shrines, and groves were merely coverings and receptacles for altars.

In the Bible we find Abel, and Noe, and Abraham, and Jacob raising altars, *i. e.*, tables of sacrifice, all typical of the Christian altar on which holy Mass is offered. Though bloody rites and mangled victims, fire and sword, and knife, and axe are often associated with the word "altar" in history, yet were there also bloodless sacrifices in olden days like our own sacred rite of the Mass. Thus we find Abraham, the father of the faithful, taking part with Melchisedec in offering and sharing an oblation of bread and wine, the very sacrifice which, as a type of the Mass, verifies the prophecy that Christ, its chief offerer, should be "a priest for ever, according to the order (*i. e.*, the rite) of Melchisedec."

Thus, just as our creed enshrines all that is true in other religions, so does our altar sum up all that is good and beautiful in their ritual. What the Bible is amongst the sacred books of the world, that the Mass is amongst its sacrifices. Research and comparison do but strengthen our claims to a supernatural origin for our altar; and what that altar connotes and implies, *viz.*, our sacrifice and our priesthood, a statement which "he who seeks" with an open mind and devout heart "will find" to be true.

Nor is this to be wondered at, if we remember that our Catholic altar symbolizes Christ, the "Golden Altar" on high, "on which and by which the prayers of the faithful are offered to God" (Apoc. viii, 3). Even on earth, we may say, our altar is He; for on it stands the tabernacle wherein He dwells day and night, pleading on our behalf, and offering our prayers to His eternal Father. To have an altar on which Mass is said, is to have, as I said, Christ "in our midst," Christ as He was born and lay a helpless babe on His Mother's breast at Bethlehem, Christ at Nazareth, Christ on the Cross. No wonder

that to a Catholic a church without an altar and a tabernacle is like an empty tomb. To walk round the stately cathedrals, so often seen in Europe, built by loving hearts and hands to embower the altar, but now, alas! empty, or ruthlessly cast down, is like passing along the streets of a dead city. They are beautiful, but only as a fossil or an empty shell is beautiful. They recall and re-echo a past once living, but now cold and dead.

It is not surprising, therefore, that on our altars, nature and art, so often used to lead men from God, are brought kneeling to His feet to join man in the one sole act of worship that offers adequate homage to the great Creator, who made all things true, good, and beautiful.

And yet the resplendent altars of to-day and the lofty fanes that cover them had their origin in the humble supper room and the plain wooden table on which our Lord served the infant Church with its first eucharistic meal, prepared by those mighty transforming words changing bread and wine into His Body and Blood; words of power, which still linger in the world on the lips of His priests, to whom He said, "Do ye this in commemoration of Me."

That altar, or table of sacrifice, like the miraculous bread it bore, has ever increased and multiplied, till in growth and development it has been as "the stone cut out of the mountain that broke into pieces" all other altars, and "filled the whole earth" (Daniel ii, 34).

Altars vary in form, but are mostly in the shape of a tomb, owing to the custom of saying Mass on the tombs of the martyrs in the Catacombs. In early days they were usually of wood, now they must be of stone, or at least the central slab, on which Chalice and Host are placed. Altars are consecrated by a bishop, and must contain relics of martyrs. A consecrated altar or altar-stone is recognized by five carved crosses in honor of the five wounds.

Over the altar is placed a crucifix, flanked by two or more candles, to indicate that Mass is a continuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and that Christ is the light of the world.

So sacred is the altar that even in God's own house, surely a holy place, the very spot where it stands is railed off as a sanctuary or specially sacred place. And yet the altar is but dead stone, made sacred by the presence of the living Christ. But there is a living altar consecrated and dedicated to God, and that is the heart of man, in which He loves to dwell.

How terrible to profane a consecrated altar! How dreadful to raise upon it an idol of Venus, or Mars, or Mammon, and sacrifice to them instead of the living God! The heathen did so, but through ignorance of Him Who was to them an unknown God. But how many Christians sacrifice on the living altars of their hearts to greed, and lust, and hatred, and envy. Let us not be of those who, Christians in name, are yet idolaters in thought and desire. Let God set up His holy altar in our hearts, *i. e.*, let Him reign there in undisputed sway. Be this the thought we carry away with us from the holy altar of God, around which we gather in holy prayer to-day.

Low Sunday

"Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said to them: 'Peace be to you.'"—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—How well these words apply to our Lord's entry into our midst in holy Mass. He was no phantom or spirit of the dead, but true flesh and blood. "Handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have"; yet He came amongst them softly, "the doors being shut." So does He enter the host and the chalice, when you hear the elevation bell ring.

To believing souls who do not need, like doubting Thomas, to "see the print of the nails, or put their hands into the wound of His side," in order to be convinced of His real presence in the midst," He brings with Him an atmosphere of peace. In the Mass, as in Judea of old, "virtue still goes out from Him" to heal, and save, and pour the balm of peace into stricken hearts. To devout souls the altar, decked out for sacrifice, breathes it; and the Mass, like Jerusalem of old, is a very vision of peace. Hence regular Mass-goers rarely commit grievous sin; and if they do, they hasten to "show themselves" to the priests in Confession, to whom, as you heard in the Gospel this morning, our Lord said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

But to value and profit by the Mass, we must understand it. Like the Bible, we bring from the Mass what we bring to the Mass. To the ignorant, the irreverent or the hostile, it is a meaningless puzzle or senseless mummery; whereas, to the devout and instructed, it is

a deep mine, a great storehouse of spiritual wealth. The few broad outlines or mental pictures of the Mass we are now about to draw may aid us to secure part of this wealth, by helping us to hear holy Mass lovingly, attentively, and devoutly.

I. In our last address we spoke of the altar to which the priest ascends when vested. Having spread the Corporal, arranged the Chalice, and opened the Missal, he comes down to the foot of the altar to begin Mass, or rather the preparation for Mass proper. The part up to the Offertory was called the Mass of the catechumens, in distinction to the remaining portion, called the Mass of the faithful, or rite proper. Hence, in early days, there were two dismissals in the Mass, one before the Offertory as a sign for the penitents, and catechumens, or candidates for baptism, to withdraw; the other, at the end of the Mass of the faithful. The first has ceased, the second remains, and is said before the last Gospel. It has given the Mass its name, Missa, *i. e.*, dismissal.

This preparatory portion of the Mass was, and is, quite separable; not sacrificial in character at all, but grounded on the old Jewish service of the synagogue. It was made up of a series of prayers and psalms, with instructions, and served a double purpose: that of praying for the penitents or converted public sinners present, thus deepening their sorrow for sin; and next, that of teaching the candidates for baptism the truths of faith, by reading portions of the Old and New Testaments, and preaching. It was much longer than at present, standing quite outside the eucharistic service proper, the part dealing with the secret mystery of the Lord's presence, reserved only to the faithful or initiated. Part of the introductory portion of the Mass now under review survives in the sermon and reading of the epistle and gospel at the chief Mass on Sundays. Another part may be said to linger in the double preparation still made by the

priest, first, by reciting the office of Matins and Lauds; and secondly, by his saying immediately before Mass, if time permits, the 83d, 84th, 85th, 115th, and 129th Psalms with other prescribed prayers.

The early part of the preparatory stage is said at the foot of the altar steps, the remaining portion at the altar itself. The leading note of the first part is one of personal expiation, or sorrow for sin; in order that both priest and people may get into tune with the great atoning Sacrifice about to be offered. Penitents just out of the mire of sin, and converts coming straight from the impure, unholy, and idolatrous rites of heathenism, had to be impressed with the need of cleansing the heart by sincere sorrow, ere being admitted into the presence of, and Communion with, the Holy of Holies. And do we not all, priests and people alike, need to-day this cleansing purification of heart, by grief for sin, in order to "prepare the way of the Lord," who comes in holy Mass.

The priest begins by making the sign of the Cross, at once a prayer and a solemn public profession of faith, a fitting introduction, surely, to the great action, by which the Trinity is best honored and the Sacrifice of the Cross carried on. Then follows the 42d Psalm, *"Introibo ad altare Dei,"* said alternately by the priest and the people, voiced by the server. This psalm is preceded and followed by an antiphon, taken from the psalm itself, and giving us the leading thought, or keynote, of the whole. Antiphon meant formerly alternate recitation. It is now a stressed or emphatic passage, phrasing pithily the sense of the whole hymn or psalm. Here it is the verse, "Introibo ad altare Dei," "I will go unto the altar of God," *i. e.,* I will get ready for the great action of sacrifice. It is said three times, to remind us of the three altars associated with the holy Mass: the altar of the Cross on which Christ died; the altar of the Church, on which Mass is said; and the "Golden altar," Christ Himself, the

living altar of heaven, on which, or rather through Whom, the prayers of all good people are offered to God (Apoc. viii, 3).

The psalm recited at the foot of the altar is said to have been composed by King David, when encircled by open enemies and false friends in the rebellion headed by his favorite son Absalom; and when, weighed down by grief for his own personal guilt, he flies for forgiveness and consolation to the altar of God.

It may sound strange, but undoubtedly deep sorrow for sin and gladness of heart are not far apart in souls who believe that the God they wish to appease by sacrifice is no blind, inexorable fate, no rigid, unyielding law, but a person, nay, a merciful God, and a loving Father. Hence we can well understand the poor penitents and catechumens of early days, or our own poor selves with hearts burdened with the memory of past sins, or bent down with the worries, cares, and anxieties of daily life, gladly catching at such verses as, "Why art thou sorrowful, Oh, my soul, and why dost thou disquiet Me," "Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him." The psalm concludes with the beautiful prayer known as the minor doxology, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," a thanksgiving, as it were, for the assured hope of mercy and grace.

Then follows the mutual confession of sin on the part of the priest and people, in the distinct utterance of the *Confitcor,* or general confession. This prayerful declaration of sin is founded on the old Jewish custom of public confession of sin before sacrifice, and is found in substance in all liturgies. In its actual form it came into use in the thirteenth century. Needless to say, that the mutual absolutions are not judicial or sacramental, but supplicatory, *i. e.,* in the shape of a prayer that God may forgive us.

After a few versicles and responses the priest salutes the people

with the oft-repeated greeting, "Dominus Vobiscum"; and as he mounts the steps asks them to join him in a secret prayer for the pardon of his sins. The Mass being a joint sacrificial form of public worship, and not merely a service of prayer, much of it is gone through in silence, to render the action more impressive, and let those present commune in secret with almighty God. Apart from this, a sacrificial rite speaks for itself. Our Lord spoke only seven words or sentences on the Cross, silently praying and suffering during the rest of the great sacrifice.

Let the few thoughts that have occupied us to-day serve to deepen our love and reverence for the holy rite of the Mass. Deep sorrow for sin, linked with hope of pardon, are the main feelings with which we should follow the words and actions of the priest as he stands with joined hands at the foot of the altar.

Associates of the "Holy Hour," who follow the stages of our Lord's Passion during the Mass, may join in spirit the sinless Victim as He lay in the garden, writhing in agony at the view of and contact with our sins. We were present to His gaze. Let us not be of those who rejected His atonement and His love. Rather let us be of the sinners, who, like Peter and Magdalen, filled His suffering heart with joy by their repentance and love.

Second Sunday After Easter

"The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The Good Shepherd is to us no dim legendary figure of the past. He is in our midst as we circle round His lowly hut or tabernacle, in fervent prayer, to-day. No shepherd guards his flock more tenderly than He, for "He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; but watcheth all the day and all the night." Nay, in holy Mass He daily lays down His life in a mystic way, that He may feed His flock. The pelican we so often see painted or carved on our altars, drawing blood from its breast to feed its young, does but symbolize what our Lord did for us on the Cross; and mystically continues in the great eucharistic Sacrifice. The Good Shepherd sheds His Blood, that by it we may live. Wherever the lamp of the sanctuary flickers, and there is a priest to tend it, there is the home of the Good Shepherd, ever ready to feed His flock with His own precious Body and Blood.

As it is at the altar that this divine Food is prepared, we may profitably go on with our lessons on the Mass—the source of this new Manna from above.

We are still at the preparatory or introductory stage of the Mass, on the second part of which we now enter, *i. e.*, from the Introit to the Offertory. The portion terminating with the Gloria will suffice to engage our attention to-day.

The priest, on mounting the step or steps, kisses the altar out of reverence to Christ, our "Golden Altar," whom it represents, and

of the relics of the martyrs it enshrines, meanwhile uttering in silence appropriate prayers.

The second part of the preparation begins with the Introit, made up of an antiphon, the verse of a psalm, which was once sung entire, and a Gloria Patri. The Introit varies with the office of the day. Though serving, and still sung, as the opening of the Mass, yet, as the word itself, "entry," denotes, it really refers to the solemn entrance, or march of the bishop or officiating priest with his attendants, to the altar of sacrifice, a reminder of which is seen in the procession of the clergy, and of some religious communities, which takes place in certain places before the chief Mass, on Sundays and holidays. Our present Introit is a remnant of the psalm and antiphon sung on those occasions.

The opening antiphon usually, though not invariably, taken from the psalms, is very carefully chosen, and gives the keynote to the character of the Mass. It is thus like the color of the vestments, the index of the season, or the feast, only with greater variety and precision, ranging in mood and tone from the sorrowful requiem in Masses of the dead, to the joyous chants heard at Christmas and Easter. Next in order after the Introit follow the Greek words, "Kyrie eleison," repeated six times, and "Christe eleison," three.

They are thought to be the remnant of a Litany, sung alternately by the priest and people, and suggesting a spontaneous outburst of sorrow and cries for mercy on the part of the penitents and catechumens, or others present. The Kyries used to continue on the part of choir or people, till the officiating bishop gave the signal to cease. They are now limited to nine, in honor of the nine choirs of angels, the first triplet being addressed to God the Father, the second to God the Son, and the third to God the Holy Ghost.

They are the only Greek words used in the Mass, and with the

two Hebrew words, *Amen* and *Alleluia*,, link the holy Sacrifice both to the Jewish Synagogue and the undivided Church, Eastern and Western, Greek and Latin.. The three languages found in the Mass thus connect it with the Sacrifice of the Cross; as the cause of our Lord's death was inscribed on it, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, all three found in the Mass.

In marked contrast to the piercing cry for pardon of the "Kyrie eleison" is the jubilant song of the angels, the "Gloria in Excelsis," that follows it. The Gloria, or angels' hymn, is one of high antiquity, probably of apostolic origin. It is said to have been introduced into the Mass towards the beginning of the seventh century. As early as the year A. D. 140, a form of it was ordered to be used on certain occasions by Pope Telesphorus. From the time of St. Gregory the Great, it was said by bishops on Sundays and festivals, and by ordinary priests only on Easter, a usage lasting till the end of the twelfth century, when the privilege was extended to all priests. It is now said on those days on which the Te Deum is said at Matins, *i. e.*, nearly every day in the year.

The Gloria in Excelsis is called the greater doxology, in contradistinction to the "Gloria Patri," etc., known as the minor doxology. The Gloria, in its actual form, though attributed by some to St. Hilary, is rather the growth or outcome of many devout minds and hearts. The germ of the hymn is the song of the angelic host, gradually enlarged. Devout souls, under the influence of religious fervor and emotion, would prolong the strains of the angels till it grew into what is now the most sublime and rousing hymn of prayer and jubilation in the Church. And yet, though probably popular and emotional, in origin it follows the "lex credendi," in being addressed in poetic form to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and expressing the four great ends of sacrifice:

adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and petition. At the end of the Gloria the priest salutes the people with the old scriptural greeting, "Dominus Vobiscum," a formula repeated seven times in the Mass, by way of safeguard, it is said, against the seven deadly sins, all of which, singly or jointly, banish God from the soul. Hence the prayer in the form of a salutation, that the Lord God may always be with His people, that so they may ever remain godly, not godless.

Bishops say "Pax tecum," a reminder that it was once their exclusive privilege to say the Gloria in the Mass, "Peace on earth" being the burden of the angelic message. The "pax" is, moreover, a higher form of sacred greeting, it being our Saviour's favorite expression. The server, in the name of the people, returns the salutation by the words, "Et cum Spiritu Tuo," *viz.*, "May the Lord's peace ever abide in your soul."

Never forget that the humble fellow man, who confesses his sins in common with you at the foot of the altar steps, and who afterwards in the Kyrie appeals for mercy, and next joins the angelic band in the joyful strains of the Gloria, merely personates Christ, the Shepherd of your souls. He is the earthly ambassador and representative of Christ your High Priest, whom, so to say, he makes visible. Christ, who, in the Incarnation, took upon Himself the form of a servant, nay, of a sinner, "for He carried our sins and bore our sorrows," likewise in the Mass prays for us, grieves and rejoices with us, in the person of the officiating priest. He is thus our Chief Priest. It is only by keeping this in mind, that we can value the Mass at its full worth.

But whilst we greet the solemn entry of the King of Glory, on His functions as our High Priest, and join Him in the mournful strains of the Kyrie, and the jubilant song of the Gloria, let us not forget the "travail of His soul," in the preparation He underwent in the garden

of Olives for the great Sacrifice of Calvary, of which the Mass is the standing memorial. There He wrestled in prayer. No jubilant Gloria was then said or sung, naught but a soul-rending Kyrie, an appeal for grace and mercy, was heard on that tragic night.

When, therefore, we listen to the Introit, let us think of our Lord's entry into the garden of sorrow. The sad cry of the Kyrie will remind us of what He had to endure for our sins. The glad outburst of the Gloria will tell us, that apparent defeat, the awful death of our Lord, issued into resurrection for Him, and redemption for us, and lifted up the eternal gates that we might enter one day upon His peace.

Third Sunday After Easter

From the Collects to the Creed

"But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice and your joy none shall take from you."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—These words were spoken by our Lord, on the eve of His Passion, in His last discourse to His disciples, which followed on the great ordinance of holy Mass and Communion that He had just instituted. It is somewhat strange they should be read in the full tide of Easter joy. After all, however, it is but "a little while," in any life, that intervenes between cross and crown. So intensely did our Lord love to "be with the children of men," that He would seem to grudge the "short while," that lay between His cruel death and His glorious Resurrection.

But in truth the words apply only to His *visible* departure, in ignominy, on the Cross; and in glory, at the Ascension. In reality, He was never absent. He was ever as He is now with us, unseen, in the gift of the Eucharist. Then, as now, He was with His disciples, in the "breaking of bread," *i. e.*, in holy Mass and Communion. Though we see Him not, nor hear His words, yet are we as truly around Him during the "Holy Hour" of prayer as were the disciples who heard from His lips the words treasured up in the Gospel of to-day. To make this presence helpful and fruitful, we cannot do better than continue our study of the sublime action of the Mass that keeps our Lord with us, body, soul and divinity. We

shall deal to-day with the part of the holy Sacrifice, extending from the Gloria to the Offertory.

I. It is the concluding portion of the preparation, and consists of prayers and instructions made up of the collects, the epistle, the gradual or tract and the Gospel. In early times this part of the Mass, like that said at the foot of the altar, was informal and detachable from the sacred mysteries of Mass proper.

The apostles retained part of the old Sabbath service of the synagogue, consisting of the reading of parts of the law and the prophets, with instructions intermingled with prayers and psalms, by way of preparation for the "breaking of bread or the Eucharist." Readings of letters from the apostles, or oral or written accounts of a part of our Lord's life, were introduced into these "assemblies" of the early Christians in various places. Thus began the formation of the New Testament. The practise survives in the epistle, and gospel, and prayers of this part of the Mass. Gradually the proceedings, always more or less variable in form and duration, according to the will of the "President" of the assembly, became arranged according to a fixed rule or type, giving rise to the various rites or liturgies. The differences of which, in details only, accentuate the unity of the great eucharistic rite in essentials.

We left off at the Gloria. After the "Dominus Vobiscum" that follows the priest moves to the epistle side of the altar where, with outstretched hands, he reads one or more prayers named Collects, appropriate to the day and season. They are so called either because they voice the united prayers of the assembly (*collecta*) or form a body or collection of choice prayers. The collects, or prayers, used in the Mass are very numerous and rich in devotional thought and feeling. Many of them were composed by saints and display keen insight, deep fervor, vivid fancy, and a wealth of devotion that must

be heard and well understood to be appreciated. Some have come down from very early times, and were, likely, the improvised and spontaneous expression of some gifted devout souls, moved to prayer on hearing the Scriptures read, or the mysteries explained. The best and choicest have been preserved, and now find a permanent place in the liturgy. Like the psalms, the prayers or collects speak out the needs and desires of the soul, and shape our inmost thoughts as we kneel before God better than we could do ourselves. To the prayers or collects succeeds the *epistle*, often called lesson, and read aloud as meant for the instruction of the people. It was formerly called "apostle," or "de apostolo," because usually, though not invariably, taken from the epistles or letters of an apostle. In early days letters of popes and bishops were also read at Mass, a testimony to the unity and intercommunion of the various churches with each other and the See of Rome.

The epistle may be taken from any part of the Scriptures, except the psalms and the four Gospels. As truth in the form of sound teaching is food for the mind, the clerk, at the end of the epistle, gives God thanks for it, in the name of the people, by the words, "Deo Gratias."

The epistle is followed by what is called the gradual, from a word meaning steps, because it consists of the remnant of a psalm chanted as the deacon, with the book of the Gospels, went down the steps of the altar, and up those of the ambo, or reading desk. This ambo is replaced in modern churches by the pulpit. At present the gradual is made up of a versicle and response, taken from the Scripture, mostly a psalm, in keeping with the character of the Mass, and followed by an Alleluia verse. The Alleluia is repeated three times. During the great penitential season, from Septuagesima to Easter, and on ferias, the joyful note of the Alleluia is replaced by the tract, so

called because formerly sung straight through in unbroken tones. Instead of a prolonged Alleluia on various notes, certain hymns, called sequences or prose, were introduced on certain great festivals. They are all hymns of joy, save the Dies iræ. They were very numerous in ancient times; but five only are now in use: the "Victimæ paschali," for Easter; "Veni Sancte Spiritus," for Pentecost; "Lauda Sion," for Corpus Christi; the "Stabat Mater," for feasts of our Lady's sorrows; and the "Dies iræ," sung in Masses for the dead. They are the most majestic and beautiful of all sacred songs, and have ever been favorite themes for musicians.

The last, and by far the most important part of the preparatory part of the Mass, is the reading of the Gospel. Such a simple thing as the removal of the book from the left to the right side of the altar is all that remains of a very solemn and stately function, called the procession of the book. At High Mass, lights and incense are still used, to indicate that the Gospel message is a light to the world, and spreads the sweet odor of Christ's name and virtues wheresoever preached. The Church's veneration for the Gospel, of which she is the official guardian, is well-nigh sacramental. The priest, before reading or singing the portion read as second lesson in the Mass, prays that God, "who cleansed the lips of Isaias with a burning coal," may purify his heart, that "he may worthily announce the holy Gospel." Both priest and people make the sign of the Cross on forehead, lips and breast, to show that the Gospel of Christ is, or rather ought to be, the rule and guide of thought, speech and desire. We should think of nothing in the head, utter nothing with the lips, or wish aught in the heart, that is opposed to the teaching of God's holy Gospel.

At the chief Mass on Sundays and holidays a sermon or instruction on the Gospel is usually preached. This custom is as old as the

synagogue. We read in the Acts (xiii, 15): "After the reading of the law and the prophets, the Ruler of the synagogue sent to them (Paul and Barnabas), saying: "Ye men brethren, if you have any word of exhortation to make to the people, speak."

These addresses on the Gospel themes were called prones, because delivered in front of the nave (pronaos). Those that survive from the early Fathers form part of the richest literary treasures of the Church.

With the Gospel, the Mass of the catechumens ends. It serves as a preparation or an introduction to the Mass of the faithful, or Mass proper. Though introductory, it is not thereby to be lightly omitted. Its every prayer, ceremony and reading carries its message, rich in suggestion, to the heart. It is that part of the Mass wherein the Good Shepherd feeds our souls with sound doctrine and holy thought, ere dispensing to them His own precious Body and Blood. To be ready, to be disposed, to prepare, in short, for a meal, is a necessary disposition to profit by it. And what better preparation than that which is now part of the Mass itself, the part that culminates in the holy Gospel. It is by the Gospel we shall be judged. Let us ever listen to its maxims, and imprint them deeply in head, heart and lips, so as to make Christ's Gospel our standard in thought, word and action.

Fourth Sunday After Easter

The Offertory to the Preface

"But when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth." —Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The office of the Holy Ghost, it would seem, is to give order, beauty, fertility and growth to what our Lord plants. Hence, between the withdrawal of the one, and the descent of the other, there was a mysterious connection both of expediency and necessity. "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you." Our Lord was a planter and sower, who apparently withdrew, to return again visibly in judgment as the reaper, meanwhile sending the Holy Ghost to ripen and bring to maturity the seeds He had sown. The action of the Holy Ghost in God's field is that of the warm sun, and gentle rain, and strong wind, getting ready the harvest.

It is the Spirit that breathes life, beauty, order and harmony into chaos. "Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. ciii, 30).

He thus molds, shapes and brings elementary things to completion and perfection. The Incarnation was His work, so is our sanctification. What we call growth, development, the process of evolution, so to say, is the function of the Spirit. Hence the unfolding or evolution of doctrine in the Church is due to the Spirit; "He will teach you all truth," and this Spirit is still at work. The Church herself, planted by our Lord, as "a grain of mustard seed," has grown up

under His fostering care into a great tree, under which all nations of the earth find shelter.

I. But nowhere is the action of the Spirit more visible than in the growth and spread of the cult of the Eucharist in holy Mass and Communion. The rite inaugurated by our Lord in the cenacle, the handful of bread He then "cast on the waters" of life, has grown under the Spirit more than a hundredfold. Mass is said and holy Communion distributed every day and hour, from the rising to the setting sun.

It was under the overshadowing Spirit that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." So is it to-day with our Lord, present in the Eucharist. The tiny seedling He planted at the Last Supper has grown, under the ripening influence of the Holy Spirit, into a tree that overshadows the whole earth. We daily pray that the Spirit who brooded over our Lady in the Incarnation, may overshadow our offerings of bread and wine, and fill them in holy Mass with the Body and Blood of Christ.

The growth and splendor of divine worship, now centered in the Mass are, therefore, due to the "Spirit of truth," promised by our Lord in the Gospel of to-day. To realize this, let us carry our thoughts a little farther in the study of this holy rite.

We have now reached the Offertory, with which the Mass proper begins. In early times it was called the Mass of the faithful, because public sinners and catechumens, or candidates for baptism, were dismissed, and devout believers alone permitted to remain. Once the Gospel was over, a deacon used to exclaim, "Sancta Sanctis," *i. e.*, "Holy things for the holy," thus proving the belief of the early Church in a holy presence, reserved for initiate believers. The Sacrifice proper begins with the Offertory, *i. e.*, the presenting to God of the bread and wine, the remote matter of the eucharistic rite.

The Creed is often said before the Offertory, and serves as a link between the Mass of the catechumens, ending with the Gospel or sermon, and that of the faithful, beginning with the Offertory, and terminating with the "*Ite missa est,*" or formula of dismissal. The Creed was not admitted into any liturgy till the fifth or sixth century, and not said at Rome till the ninth. What more fitting, however, than that believers should publicly profess their faith, on the greater festivals at least, in the teaching of Him who is main Actor, Priest and Victim in the Mass.

The remaining portions of the Sacrifice form the rite proper, and are the substantial and authorized enlargements of the acts and words of our Saviour at the Last Supper. The Mass is an ordered, legitimate development or growth from the seed He planted therein.

The part of the Mass called the Offertory, extends from the Gospel to the Preface. It is the getting ready, or preparation, so to say, of the matter of the Sacrifice, during which six prayers, exclusive of the Secrets, are said. The priest, after saying "Dominus Vobiscum," invites the people to join him in the first of these prayers, called the Offertory proper. It is an antiphon, usually the fragment of a psalm, formerly sung by the people, whilst the deacons were arranging the bread and wine for the celebrant. What was used at the altar was only a part of the gifts *in kind* brought by the faithful. The rest were set apart for the support of the clergy and of widows and orphans. In thus "bringing their gifts to the altar" (Matt. v, 24), the people were accustomed to give each other the holy kiss of peace. The "Pax," as this custom is called, still survives amongst the clergy, present in choir at High Mass, but further on in the function, at the conclusion of the first prayer after the Agnus Dei. The present practise of making a collection during the Offertory, by passing

round a plate for money, is a reminder of the above bringing of gifts on the part of the people.

The second prayer, or "*Suscipe Sancte Pater,*" is said over the bread, raised on the paten, before being placed on the corporal. The corporal is a square piece of linen, so called because it touches the Body of the Lord.

The third prayer is said when the priest mingles a few drops of water with the wine. This ceremony is probably apostolic. The mixed chalice, as it is called, is alluded to by Justin Martyr as far back as A. D. 150. It is emblematical of the two natures in Christ, divine and human, as also the union of our Lord with His people.

The fourth prayer is said by the priest when he raises the chalice and makes the oblation, or offering of the wine. The offering of the bread and wine in this part of the Mass, is not sacrificial, but anticipatory. They do not form the offering of a victim, but of gifts destined to become one under the transforming power of the words of consecration. Sacrificial offerings of lifeless things have ceased, Christ alone being now our "sole spotless Host and saving Victim."

The fifth prayer is made by the priest after the offering of the chalice, when, with bent head and joined hands placed on the edge of the altar, he prays, first, that the combined offering of priest and people may be pleasing to God; and next, invokes the Holy Ghost to descend and bless their gifts.

At the conclusion of this prayer the priest moves to the epistle side for the Lavabo. Whilst washing the tips of the thumb and fore-finger of each hand, he recites the twenty-fifth psalm. This washing of the hands is one of the oldest ceremonies in the Mass, and one found in all liturgies. It shows the need of purity of heart for the consecration and reception of the Eucharist.

Returning to the middle of the altar, and bowing humbly with

joined hands, he utters the sixth and last prayer, bearing directly on the Offertory, called "Suscipe Sancta Trinitas," addressed to the Trinity.

The great sacrificial rite moves on with ever-increasing earnestness and solemnity. The activity and bustle necessarily attending the preparation and laying out of the gifts or offerings of sacrifice die down, as it were, giving place to stillness and silence. The priest turns round, and at the "Orate fratres" makes his last audible appeal to the faithful, his joint offerers, that their united sacrifice may be acceptable to God, and is answered in their name by the server. Certain prayers are said in a low voice, called *Secrets,* corresponding in number and character with the Collects, or prayers, said aloud in the preparation. They prepare those present for the deep silence that is to reign in the most solemn and sacred part of the Mass, the Canon, and symbolize the silence of Christ during the Passion.

The thought uppermost in the mind during this part of the Mass, as the word offertory suggests, should be a presenting, or putting aside, gifts to be offered in sacrifice to God. We should join our High Priest, who offers Himself without reserve, in giving our hearts, the only thing we can call our own, to God, hearts not rankling with envy, jealousy, or spite, nor given over in bondage to God's enemies; but make of them, as far as we can, by love and sorrow for sin, "a pure and spotless victim."

Now is the time, also, to make an offering to God of some act, or good work, involving self-denial, that we feel He asks of us.

We may also remember in this part of the Mass the four great ends of sacrifice that are gathered up in the Mass: that of adoration and thanksgiving, of expiation and petition. Our Lord and High Priest takes up our poor defective offering and makes it His own.

We are lifted up by Him, and stand by His side as fellow offerers of the great Sacrifice, thus sharing, so to say, in His infinity.

But, let our offering be, as far as may be, sincere, whole-hearted, and unreserved.

Fifth Sunday After Easter

The Preface

"Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Holy Mass, as we have seen, is the highest form of the prayer of petition, placing the wealth of God's treasury, so to say, within our reach. Indeed, one of the main ends for which it is offered is that of petition, *i. e.,* asking favors from almighty God in Christ's name, thus making it the carrying out to the letter, of the counsel you have heard from our Lord's own lips in the Gospel of the day.

The note of prayer for our own wants, and those of others, for the living and for the dead, is never absent from the Mass. It is not private prayer. The Mass is more even than "two or three gathered together in Christ's name." It is the public prayer of the whole Church militant with our Lord Himself as spokesman, to voice our every need. He is therein our standing Advocate with the Father; and you have just heard His words in the Gospel, "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you." Under what more favorable circumstances, then, can we frame our petitions, than in the great fountain of impetration, the holy Mass. To learn all we can about the Mass, is to learn how to pray.

We have already dwelt on the two first divisions of the Mass, the Preparation and the Offertory; the one serving to prepare the

inward powers of the soul to take part in the great offering; the other, arranging the outward gifts that are to be offered.

The prayer, accompanying the action, rises in an ascending scale of earnestness and fervor, till it breaks forth in the jubilant song, or chant, called the Preface, theme of our short discourse to-day.

The Preface serves as a prelude to the Canon, or most sacred part of the Mass. Just as the Creed serves to unite the preparatory part of the Sacrifice to the Offertory, so does the Preface invariably link the Offertory to the Canon.

The Preface is one of the oldest and most venerable forms of invocation in the Mass, being a growth and adaptation of the actual form of thanksgiving used by our Lord at the Last Supper, and thus giving to the Eucharist its name. If we regard the Mass as a sacrificial banquet, the Preface serves as "grace," or thanks, for the great meal, or supper, to which we are invited.

It is found in all liturgies as a sort of prelude or introduction leading up to the actual words of consecration. Most likely our Lord joined with His apostles in chanting the usual Jewish Passover formula, or psalms of thanksgiving, with appropriate responses at the Paschal Supper; and the formula He used gave rise to, or grew into, the actual Preface. The Mass is the new Pasch, and our Lord, the Paschal Lamb, the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Just as our Lord summed up all that was perfect in human nature, so does holy Mass, wherein He is Victim, include all that "was worthy and of good repute," all the divine elements, in short, of all antecedent forms of prayer and sacrifice, whatsoever their source.

There are now eleven varying forms of Preface used in the Roman rite, all dealing in triumphant tones with one central theme, that of thanksgiving. The Preface is made up of three parts: the introduc-

tion, the body of the hymn, and the conclusion. The variations occur only in the body or central part of the hymn, in accordance with the feast or the season.

The words, "Per omnia saecula saeculorum," with which the Preface opens, form, in reality, the conclusion of the last secret prayer the priest has just said. He then, without turning round, greets the people with the salutation, "Dominus Vobiscum," "The Lord be with you." In former times, as in the Greek Church now, a veil or curtain was drawn across the sanctuary at the "Orate fratres," thus screening the priest and ministers during the most solemn parts of the Mass. As the Lord of heaven and earth is about to come down amongst them and render "the place terrible," the priest invites all present, in the words, "Sursum Corda," to raise their thoughts on high, thinking only of God. Being assured by the server, speaking in their name, that they have done so, in the answer, "We have lifted them to the Lord," he invites them to join in the great eucharistic prayer, saying, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," and catching up their answer, "It is meet and just," goes on in triumphant strains with the body of the hymn, which, with occasional variations, in harmony with the feasts or seasons of the year, maintains the note of thanksgiving to the end. And as if incompetent to thank almighty God in a manner worthy of the eucharistic gift, he invites the angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, and the whole heavenly host to praise, bless, and adore the Supreme Majesty of God. Then, by way of conclusion, the sublime hymn terminates with the still more sublime cry of the Seraphim, as heard by Isaias (Isaias v, 3), in what we call the Sanctus, and the Benedictus, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts. Full are the heavens and the earth of Thy glory. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

For our God cometh not "in clouds descending," not in might and majesty, but meekly and gently, like the falling dew, under the lowly emblems of bread and wine, to be "our saving Host."

All Prefaces have this same ending; first, the anthem known as the *Trisagion,* or thrice holy, the *triple Sanctus,* sung by the choir up to the Elevation; when, after a pause, the singing is renewed in the Benedictus, or second part of the anthem. The triple Sanctus is taken from the fifth chapter of Isaias, when the winged Seraphim, in front of the high throne alternately repeated, "Holy, holy, holy the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory." A like thrice repeated Sanctus, or holy, in honor of our Triune God, was heard by St. John on the part of the four weird living creatures, who "Rested not day and night saying, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come'" (Apoc. iv, 8).

The Benedictus, or second verse of the conclusion, is made up of the glad cry of joy raised by the crowd who welcomed our Saviour on His solemn entry into Jerusalem, "Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxi, 9).

Thus ends the jubilant hymn of the Preface, taken, as was said, in its earliest form and actual main outlines from the psalms and responses of the Jewish Hallel, and sung by our Lord with His disciples at the Last Supper. The Preface thus connects our present Mass with the ritual accompanying "the breaking of bread" amongst the apostolic Christians at Jerusalem, when the holy city still stood erect, "the joy of the whole earth," ere yet her "enemies had cast a trench and compassed her round about."

The Preface ended, all drop on their knees. A hush comes over the assembled faithful, when the tinkling bell gives the signal that the priest is beginning the most solemn part of the Mass, and bidding

them stand in awe before the "Holy of Holies," soon to appear on our altars as our Victim and our Food.

The Preface is thus a sort of welcome to our fast approaching King. But it is more: it is an intensely fervent form of prayer, wherein the note of thanksgiving dominates, and yet mingled with awe, praise, adoration and exulting joy. We pray confidently, too, in the name of Jesus, and support our petition by the whole heavenly host.

What more suitable sentiments can animate us, as we kneel in holy prayer before the self-same silent Victim in the Tabernacle, who comes to us in the holy Mass, than those voiced in the Preface. And lest we should feel His absence, when Mass is over, He lingers behind to receive our visits and hear our petitions. Take to heart, then, and act upon the words of our Lord in the Gospel of to-day, "Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Sunday Within Octave of Ascension

The Canon as far as the Consecration

"He shall give testimony of Me; and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Nowadays there is no more emphatic manner of witnessing to Christ than by devout and regular attendance at holy Mass. It may be truly said that a practical Catholic is one who frequents the Eucharist, both as a Sacrifice and a Sacrament. To do so is a proof of belief in the real Presence, the "hard saying," which caused so many, once our Lord's own professed disciples, to go back and "walk no more with Him" (John vi, 17).

The survival and spread of the Mass, its acceptance by the holiest and most advanced peoples of the world, would be an enigma, were it not a standing proof of the action of the Holy Ghost in the Church. "He shall give testimony of me." We, too, by our presence here today, bear witness to our eucharistic Lord. With St. Peter, we neither fear, nor doubt, nor hesitate to draw near in divine Communion to Him, "Who has the words of eternal life," and who meant what He said in those words that shocked and still shock so many, though in reality they are but the overwhelming excess of divine, and necessarily infinite, love: "Whosoever eateth My flesh, abideth in Me and I in him" (John vi, 57).

To appreciate even in part this great love, let us dwell briefly on another section of holy Mass.

I. In our last discourse we spoke of the Preface, or song of

thanksgiving and praise, leading to the Canon or central part of the Mass, containing the great eucharistic prayer and formula of institution, and to which all other parts of the Mass are but a frame and setting. A few words to-day and the Canon in general, and on the portion ending at the consecration, in particular.

This part of the Mass, called Canon, from a Greek word meaning rule, is so named because it is the fixed rule, or settled ordinance, that has never varied in essentials since our Lord first launched the Mass on the world at the Last Supper, saying to His disciples: "Do this in remembrance of Me." The kernel of the Mass lies in what Jesus "said and did" on that occasion, all which is summed up and finds a place in the Canon. His actions and words gave rise, no doubt, to the other parts of the Mass also; but in the Canon, the connection with what "Jesus said and did" is closer. . We may say, without hesitation, that the Canon of the Mass, *i. e.,* the part beginning with the prayers that follow the Sanctus, till the end of the priest's Communion, contains substantially the ritual of the first century. It embodies, therefore, Mass as said by the Apostles, in the "breaking of bread" from house to house, and was so said before a line of the New Testament was written. By the time that St. John wrote the Apocalypse, the broad lines, not only of the Canon, but of the whole Mass, were laid down and carried out in practise. Certainly, there is nothing older and more valuable in Christian ritual than the Canon of the Mass, called also, by way of eminence, "the Prayer"; and, as transforming the bread and wine into our Lord's Body and Blood, "the action." As no addition has been made to the Canon since the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590-604), it is, in its present form, some 1,400 years old.

The Canon, with few exceptions, is said in silence, and lasts from the end of the Sanctus to the Communion, though some say only to

the Pater Noster. It may be regarded as one continuous prayer, branching off before the Consecration into five different parts. The first portion of the Canon, the "Te igitur quaesumus," "We humbly pray and beseech thee," is a prayer for the living, preceded by a petition, on the part of the priest, for a blessing on the bread and wine, over which he makes three crosses, calling them respectively, "These gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices." As gifts they come from God; as presents we return them to Him as a sacred offering; and we now call them holy and unspotted sacrifices, by way of anticipation of the divine Victim, into which they will be transformed. Earnest prayer is then made for the Church for its peace, protection, and the mutual union of its members; and especially for the reigning pontiff and our local bishop.

The great prayer next branches off into what is called the "Memento of the living," wherein the priest, turning to the altar, prays silently for those living persons whom he wishes to share in the fruits of the Mass. The great intercession for the living and the dead has always found a place in the central part of the Mass, called the Canon. In Roman rite the memento or prayer for the dead is said after the Consecration.

The names of those to be prayed for were, in early times, inscribed on diptychs or tablets, and read out publicly by the deacon. Later, these lists were placed on the altar, vestiges of which custom remains to the present day.

Next follows that part of the great prayer called "Communicantes," wherein we unite our prayers on earth with those of the saints above, notably our Lady and the twelve Apostles, thus bridging the gulf between this world and the next in the consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints. Twelve early martyrs are singled out for mention, of whom six are Popes.

After this comes the "Hanc igitur oblationem," a beautiful and solemn prayer, in which petition is made for acceptance of our offering of the Mass; for peace, one of God's greatest gifts, for delivery from eternal death in hell, and for entry amongst the elect.

It is here that the officiating priest stretches his hands over the bread and wine, thereby indicating that he transfers the sins of the world to the divine Victim about to be laid on the altar. In the old law the officiating priest used to put his hand on the victim, as a sign that it should stand as a sin offering, in man's place.. The same action is mystically renewed in holy Mass.

Finally, as the solemn moment draws near, when the divine Presence is to come to the species, the great prayer breaks off into a blessing on what is still only bread and wine. Almighty God is asked to bless, approve, and ratify the offering; and grant that these "poor elements" may become to us, the Body and Blood of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The great action of the Mass, enshrined in the Canon, is the dramatic reproduction of the life, sufferings, and death of Christ. Therein He is born for us, as at Bethlehem; mystically slain for us, as on Calvary, and all this that the fruits of redemption may reach our souls singly. Meanwhile, we are in close touch with angels and saints in their task of adoring the Lamb that "was slain and still liveth to make intercession for us."

Be not, then, at holy Mass of those who in body are present, yet in spirit are far away from Him. Let us rather rouse our faith and join in mind and heart the heavenly host, hastening to meet their King, whose approaching presence the tinkling bell has just announced.

Pentecost

"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—The Holy Ghost did not come down upon the infant Church as a casual visitor, but as a permanent guest. He is with her to-day, as on Pentecost, in all the plenitude of His gifts. The power that transformed the few timid souls, clinging to Christ, under the leadership of Peter, into a band of saintly heroes, is still at work in the mystic body of Christ, the Church, one, holy, Catholic and apostolic, bracing, strengthening; and training, in short, its members to become one day fit citizens for heaven.

But not only is Christ's mystic body the Church, under the guardianship of the Holy Spirit; His real body in the Eucharist is so likewise. Just as at Nazareth, in accordance with the angel's message, the power of the Holy Ghost overshadowed a spotless virgin; and the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us"; so, also, in the Mass, the Holy Spirit effects the real presence of our Lord when the creative words of Consecration are uttered. He thus mystically perpetuates on our altars the mystery of the Incarnation wrought at Nazareth.

The growth and spread of the Mass, and its outcome, the cult of the Eucharist, are the work of the Pentecostal Spirit still animating the Church, and "Teaching her all things, and bringing to her mind whatsoever Christ, her founder, said to her."

I. In pursuance of our reflections on holy Mass, we enter to-day on its most solemn and sacred part, the Consecration, the core, center

and culminating point of the great sacrificial action. All hitherto done and said in the Mass is but a prelude to this. The deep hush that falls on the assembled people, as the tinkling bell announces the coming of the divine Presence on the gifts of the offertory, tells how sacred is that part of the Mass which goes under the name of the Elevation. And no wonder! For herein we come into close touch with "the mystery of faith," which makes the Mass the most wondrous manifestation of divine love, inasmuch as we believe that the offerings of bread and wine, brought to God's altar by willing hands and loving hearts, are such no longer, but become, once the consecrating words are over, "really, truly and substantially the Body and Blood of Christ." This is *"the secret,"* the mystery so carefully guarded in early ages, that even catechumens seeking admittance into the Church were not permitted to stay to witness it brought about. It was a fact and doctrine so holy, so sublime, so far transcending sense and reason, that no profane eye nor ear should see or hear it. Only to the holy and the initiated, the faithful, in short, who should love and adore it, was it allowed to assist at the Canon of the Mass, wherein Consecration takes place.

"Sancta Sanctis." Let the catechumens and the lapsed, even though repentant, leave the sacred precincts. For them the Mass was over, at the very offertory wherein the matter to be changed at Consecration was hallowed.

Happily the "discipline of the secret" exists no longer. There is no dismissal at the presentation of gifts. No screen nor curtain veils the sanctuary when the "mystery of faith" is being affected. It has outlived the jeers, and taunts, and scorn, and mocking of the old Roman world, as it will survive those of the world to-day. Nowadays the Mass, our most priceless inheritance, is open to all. Even sinners and unbelievers, if respectful, may enter the "holy of holies,"

and witness the priest, in obedience to the divine ordinance, daring to personate Christ, as he utters the consecrating formula over the bread: "Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with His eyes lifted up towards heaven to Thee God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless, break and give to His disciples, saying: "Take and eat ye all of this, for this is my Body.' "

On saying these words the priest falls on his knees, in mute adoration, and holds up the consecrated host, to be seen and adored by the people, during which action the bell rings thrice. He then proceeds to the consecration of the cup, or chalice, using Christ's words at the Last Supper, "In like manner after He had supped, taking this excellent Chalice into His holy and venerable hands, and giving Thee thanks, He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: 'Take and drink ye all of this; for this is the Chalice of My Blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many, to the remission of sins." "As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." Again does the priest bend his knee, and raise the chalice, to be seen, and worshiped by all present. And why? Because the words he has just pronounced mean what they say, and what they meant, in the mind of Christ, who first used them. No sane human being would dare to utter such words seriously without a divine warrant. If the Church is wrong in adoring the living Christ in holy Mass, how could our Lord say with truth in the gospel of the day, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I have said to you."

We have not to go very far back in history to find those who first denied the real presence of Christ in the Mass; but we must

go back to our Lord Himself to find Him who first affirmed it, or indeed, even dreamt or thought of such a wonder as the Divine Presence under the form of bread and wine.

The elevation and adoration of the Host at this point of the Mass did not take place till the thirteenth century. It is said to have been introduced, by way of protest, against Berengarius, who first denied the real presence a century before; or again certain writers who claimed that the change was not complete till after the consecration of the wine.

The Church hereby emphatically declares the presence of the living and glorified Body and Blood of Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, jointly present under each emblem. The separate consecration of each is the mystical representation of the death of Christ, necessary for sacrifice. As far as the actual words go, there is a division or separation of Body and Blood, though, in reality, He is received in Communion, under each kind, not dead or mangled, but whole and entire, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity

For sacrificial purposes the apparent death, destruction or change of state of the Victim, is verified or represented in the double consecration; our Lord thereby lies on the altar, as on the Cross, "the Lamb as it were slain." Under the emblems He is mystically rent in twain by the sword of the word, and lies on the altar a helpless Victim at the mercy of His creatures, bound, raised aloft or cast down at their good pleasure. Compared with His state of resplendent glory in heaven, He is lowered in the Mass to that of becoming the food of His creatures, surely thus made a Victim of infinite and incomprehensible love.

And just to think that all this takes place in our midst, during the brief, almost momentary, act of consecration! Calvary is renewed, and the Incarnate God lies on our altars, the Victim of sin, that we

may the more easily draw near the "Saviour's fountains," and drink deep draughts of "copious redemption." Its daily repetition on so many altars makes us insensible to the wonders it involves. And yet the most stirring, tragic or dramatic events recorded in the press are nothing in comparison with what goes on hourly in the part of the Mass we have dwelt on to-day.

We are moved to tears, roused to anger, inflamed with love, melt in pity at the mere dramatic representation of what is but a mere transcript of daily human life. Shall we remain cold or indifferent whilst assisting at the drama of the Cross, the tragedy of Calvary, wherein Christ again stands at the altar, our Victim and our Priest?

And as we bow low in humble adoration at the Consecration and Elevation, let us think of our Lord lifted up upon the Cross, and beg Him to fulfil His promise of drawing us and all to Himself.

Holy Trinity

The Mass from the Consecration to the Pater Noster

"And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."—Gospel of day.

Did our Lord speak these words as God, or as Man? Assuredly, as Man. For as God He always was, is, and ever will be, intimately present to His creatures; whereas He now speaks of a new, personal, human presence, such as they then enjoyed in His risen state, a presence that should more than compensate for His visible withdrawal. Hence He said it was "expedient," *i. e.,* advisable, He should go; inasmuch as the advent of the Holy Spirit should secure in their midst this strange sacramental presence everywhere and permanently. This multiplied presence of our Lord bodily takes place in holy Mass; and as that presence does not pass away with the Mass, but abides in our tabernacles, we have Him amongst us, as He promised in the Gospel, "all days, even to the end of the world." It is no longer, "Jesus of Nazareth passing by," this spot or that, in the shrunken remnant of the kingdom of David, his father, in the flesh; but our eucharistic Lord, present everywhere in "His kingdom without end," lying on our altars, "the Lamb, as it were slain," at once our atoning sacrifice and our life-sustaining food. As it is to the Mass we owe all this, we should study its details with earnest and devoted attention. Learned men give up their whole lives often to research in one branch of knowledge, nay, to one single object, a leaf, a flower, or an insect. Shall we deem it superfluous to learn all we can about the holy action that keeps our Lord amongst us "all

days, even to the end of the world?" Let us therefore go on with our study of the Mass. To-day we shall dwell briefly on the part of the Canon, extending from the Consecration to the Pater Noster.

Once the Elevation bell ceases to ring the Consecration is over, and our Lord lies on the altar in the state of a Victim. By a law of the supernatural order, the bread and wine have lost their inner essence, or substance, and are now replaced by the Body and Blood of Christ.

The great prayer of the Canon, as already observed, is broken up into various detached parts. The portion immediately following the Consecration and extending to the "Memento for the dead," falls into three divisions, the first of which, *"Unde et memores,"* goes under the name of the *"Anamnesis,"* or remembrance of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, in order to enhance, as it were, the value of the gift we now offer to God jointly with Christ. In this prayer the formal or sacrificial offering of the Victim, as such, is made to almighty God. The part of the Mass called the Offertory proper, is merely a dedication to God of the matter to be converted into the Victim, strictly so called, which is now formally and confidently offered to Him as "a pure Victim, a holy Victim, an immaculate Victim, the holy Bread of eternal life, and the Chalice of everlasting salvation."

The many signs of the Cross, made after the Consecration, are not blessings of the Host, as are those made before, over the bread and wine; but serve to symbolize the close connection between the sacrifice of the Cross and that of the Mass.

In the second portion of this prayer, *"Supra quae,"* mention is made of the three main sacrifices of the old law, typical of the Mass, those of Abel, Abraham and Melchisedec, the latter of whom offered bread and wine, and gave a name to the priesthood of Christ.

At the third or concluding prayer, before the "Memento for the dead," "*Supplices te rogamus,*" the priest bows down profoundly, with joined hands, resting on the edge of the altar, and begs God "to command the gifts just offered to be carried by the hands of His holy angel to His own altar on high," an allusion, no doubt, to the Angel of Sacrifice in the Apocalyptic vision (Apoc. viii, 3). "To whom was given much incense, that he should offer up the prayer of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the Throne of God." Holy Mass is a supreme act of prayer in which we all join to ask Christ, our High Priest, our "Angel of great Counsel," to present our prayers on the "golden altar" of His glorified humanity in heaven. The prayers we quietly say in book, or on beads, at the lowliest altar of any humble chapel, are ratified and presented on the resplendent golden altar above, "ever living to make intercession for us." This prayer goes under the Greek name of "*Epiclesis,*" or calling down, from its supposed resemblance to a prayer, in the Greek liturgy, invoking the Holy Ghost to carry out the work of the sacrifice.

The great prayer is interrupted here by the insertion of the Memento for the Dead, sometimes named the fifth prayer of the Canon. Though intercession for the departed has always found a place in the great eucharistic prayer of the Canon, it was not inserted at this point till the thirteenth century. The list of the names of those to be prayed for was formerly read out here from the diptychs or tablets. The insertion of a name on these diptychs was regarded as a sign of orthodoxy and of communion with the faithful, whereas its exclusion was deemed a mark of schism, or heresy. This only regards the open publication of names, because secretly and in his private capacity the priest may pray for anybody and everybody, all, in fact, for whom Christ died.

At the *"Nobis quoque peccatoribus,"* the first words of what is sometimes called the sixth and last prayer of the Canon, the silence of the great central prayer of the Mass is broken by a slight raising of the voice. This prayer, in reality a continuation of the Memento, is a prayer for the living, in the hope that they, too, may one day join the ranks of the departed saints, many of whom are enumerated, "Into whose company we beseech Thee to admit us, not by weighing our merits, but by a free gift of pardon."

The next and last prayer of the Canon, in case the Communion is not included in it, resumes the sequence broken by the insertion of the Memento for the Dead. Taking up the conclusion of the previous prayer, "Through Christ our Lord," the priest goes on to say, "By whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, vivify, bless and grant us all these good things." The "good things" here specified are, first of all, the gift of the precious Body and Blood of Christ; and next, the gifts that lay outside the altar offerings, in early times, and which may be now extended to mean all that a bountiful God gives us in nature and in grace. Three crosses are made over the Host and chalice during this prayer. The priest then uncovers the chalice and, tracing three crosses inside and two outside the open chalice, concludes at the same time the great central prayer with an act of praise to the adorable Trinity, "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, to Thee God, the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost be all honor and glory." At the end of these words the priest slightly raises the Host and chalice together. This action is known as the minor Elevation, a much older form of presenting the Host and chalice for the adoration of the faithful than what takes place after the Consecration. In some countries this action is announced by the tinkling of the bell.

The solemn doxology, or act of praise to the blessed Trinity,

concludes with the priest saying aloud: *"Per omnia Secula Seculorum," i. e.,* "For ever and ever," a sentiment ratified by the congregation saying, through the server, their representative, "Amen." It is very fitting that the great central prayer of the Mass, the Canon, should end with an outburst of praise to God, three in one, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the ever blessed Trinity, in whose honor Mass to-day is offered, and to whom be "all honor and glory for ever and ever."

Second Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Mass, from the Pater to the Priest's Communion Inclusive

"A certain man made a great supper and invited many."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The great supper of the Gospel aptly symbolizes the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and particularly that portion of it we propose to explain to-day, *viz.*, the Communion. For Mass is a sacrifice in the form of a meal, the new Pasch, wherein both priest and people are invited to feast on the Lamb that was slain for their sins. There is nothing to shock or repel in this banquet, because it is put before us in the form of bread, "Having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste" (Wisd. xvi, 20). The coarse, bloody sacrifices of old have been merged into the one pure, bloodless offering, that ascends to God as "an odor of sweetness" in every place, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same."

The Liturgy of the concluding part of the Mass centers round the Communion, its core and climax. The Our Father links the great central prayer of the Canon to those that form the preparation for Communion. Indeed, from apostolic times the sublime prayer, Pater Noster, breathing the Spirit of Christ, its author, and voicing all our needs, ever formed part of this preparation, but was not inserted in its present place till the time of Pope St. Gregory, who wished it to take precedence of any prayers composed by human authors. It would be out of place here to explain a prayer so clear

and so filled with divine unction as the Pater. Enough to say, that in the prayer following "*Libera nos Domine,*" the Church lingers on its last note and repeats, or rather amplifies, the seventh petition, "To be delivered from all evils, past, present, and to come"; and at the same time craves earnestly for the divine gift of peace. This enlargement of the last clause of the Pater, called "*embolismus,*" or "thrown in," finds a place in all liturgies.

It is followed by the rite known as the fraction, or breaking of the Host, thus repeating our Lord's action at the Last Supper. This rite is therefore part of the divine ordinance. Indeed, the whole Mass in the "Acts of the Apostles" goes under the name of "The breaking of bread" (Acts ii, 42; xx, 7, 11).

The Host is broken into three parts, one of which is dropped into the chalice, to denote the unity of the Sacrament under each kind; and mystically, the reunion of our Lord's Body and Blood at the Resurrection. In early days a large Host was carried from the altar by the deacon, to be broken into particles for the people; and another left on the altar for the Communion of the priest and assistant ministers. When Communion under both kinds ruled in the Church, ministerial chalices containing wine mingled with that consecrated in the chalice at Mass were carried round to be administered to the people. In the Greek Church, at present, holy Communion is said to be administered under both kinds with a spoon.

The breaking of the Host is accompanied by a short prayer for peace, that our Communion should be "effectual to eternal life." In the "Agnus Dei" the priest again makes a direct solemn appeal to the Prince of Peace, stretched, as it were, on our altars, for the same holy gift of peace and mercy for the living, or of eternal rest for the departed. By way of impressing this appeal, a prayer fol-

lows imploring Christ to grant "that unity and peace amongst the members of His flock which He prayed for at the Last Supper, and of which holy Communion, the mutual sharing in the same spiritual food and drink, is the outward sign and inward pledge. To accentuate this all-important point, the "Pax," or kiss of peace, used to take place at Mass amongst the early Christians. We are reminded of this at High Mass, when the Pax is passed round after this prayer amongst the clergy in choir.

Next follow, by way of immediate preparation, two intensely beautiful prayers of comparatively recent introduction. The first breathes an ardent longing to be freed from that which may hinder our union with God, sin. The second craves for deliverance from the abuse of the precious gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ, that we may not receive it "unto judgment and condemnation, but that through God's goodness it may be to us a safeguard and a remedy both of soul and body."

Then, full of trust in the divine goodness, the priest adores the Host on bended knee, and, reverently taking it in his hands, says: "I will take the bread of heaven and call upon the name of the Lord." But, as a keen sense of personal sinfulness and unworthiness must ever stir the breast of any human being, drawing so near as this to the all-pure and holy God, he thrice addresses the Lord in the humble centurion's prayer that won the admiration and praise of the Master by its depth and sincerity, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." He then makes the sign of the Cross with the Host, and just as he is about to receive says in words we should re-echo at holy Communion, "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto life everlasting." A similar prayer, appropriate to the emblem, accompanies the reception of the chalice.

Whether deemed part of the Canon or not, the Communion closes the great action of sacrifice. Ritually, Mass is over. God and His creatures have met and embraced in an intimacy and completeness so sacred, so ineffable, that one almost trembles at the thought. It is only in submission to His own express command, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you," that either priest or people dare thus draw so near to God.

Though not an essential part of the sacrificial rite, the priest's Communion is its completion, an integral part of the Mass therefore, and so important that if, between Consecration and Communion, the officiating priest should be taken ill or die, another must be found to complete the sacrifice, by Communion, even not fasting, when no other can be had.

We live in a network of mystery. To the thoughtful and observant there is a world of wonders in every mote, and sunbeam, and drop of water; but the Mass is the supreme wonder and mystery of the world. Nature teems with marvels that appeal to eye and ear, but what are they to those of faith. And yet even Nature is a sealed book to the worldly and frivolous. Whoever thinks on what it is for God every day to "open His hand and fill with plenty every living creature?" The whole earth is thus put under contribution by Him to furnish our daily wants. Our daily bread, that people hardly take the trouble of thanking God for, has a history as strange as any romance. That it is daily, regular, and natural makes it none the less marvelous and mysterious.

But what is food for the body compared to the heavenly Manna that God rains down daily on earth in holy Mass? There, too, He "opens His hand and fills with plenty"; but it is not the earth, but the heaven of heavens, that furnishes the banquet of the Mass. It is

not choice meat, and luscious wines, and delicate fruit, to furnish which this whole world of ours is laid under tribute; but food rarer, richer, better still, "bread direct from heaven," more wonderful than that given to ungrateful Israel in the desert, and answering all their bodily needs and cravings; but the new Manna that sates the boundless cravings of the soul, and which "He that eateth shall live for ever." We cannot, we dare not, describe the nature of the food we can share with the priest in the Communion of the Mass, save in the words uttered by Him who is to us "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi, 58).

And just to think that within easy reach, perhaps, of our own doors, we are daily furnished with this Divine food, and can thus share, without toil or expense, in the Bread of angels. Consciously or unconsciously, we are all "souls athirst for the living God"; and here, in the Communion of the Mass, the fountains that can alone sate our cravings are open to us. "All ye that thirst come to the waters. Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which doth not satisfy you" (Is. lv, 1, 2).

How many, alas, like the invited guests in the gospel of the day, toil and moil for the pittance of a day, for the bread that perishes; and yet will hardly cross the road, even on a Sunday, to hear holy Mass, wherewith they may share, if prepared, in the sacred Food, "Which he that eateth shall live for ever."

Third Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Mass, from the Communion to the End

"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The Scribes and Pharisees professed to be shocked at our Lord's choice of companions. What would they have said if told that "this man" would not only sit down at table with sinners, but actually give them His Body to eat, and His Blood to drink?" Yet, this is what our Lord is daily doing in holy Mass. Look at the motley throng who join the priest in confessing their sins at the foot of the altar, and afterwards come up to the rails to share with him, in holy Communion, "the Body that was delivered for us, and the Blood that was shed for us."

Indeed, our Lord seems to have a special attraction for sinners. He leaves the ninety-nine just to look for the sheep that is lost. He left the heavenly host of bright unfallen spirits to seek our lost humanity. Nay, He pursues each single, erring, human soul through life as if He had lived, loved and died for it alone. "He has not left us orphans." From His lowly home, the tabernacle, He watches our goings in and goings out. When you wander away from the fold, into forbidden pastures, His eye and heart follow you. He goes with His priests, your pastors, into every nook and corner of the world, trying to bring you back, and rejoices when He succeeds. What is conversion, what is the finding of the lost sheep but its coming back to its eucharistic Lord, with cleaned garb, in holy Communion? Therein He presses it again, as it were, to His sacred

Heart. He enters into ineffable Communion, not merely with the innocent, and the pure, and the holy, but with "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

In Mass and Communion we strike the personal note in dealing with almighty God. What shocks the Scribes and Pharisees of to-day is the awful nearness and closeness of union between God and His sinful creatures involved in the Communion of the Mass. "This man," this God-man of the Christians, "eateth with sinners," nay, "giveth them His Body to eat, and His Blood to drink." They do not understand the extent, the very extravagance of infinite love. If God loves at all, if the sacred Heart is swayed by an infinite personality, it must love far beyond our puny measure, and that, too, in human fashion; for He who comes to us in the Mass is both God and Man.

We have very appropriately to deal to-day with that part of the Mass extending from the priest's Communion to the end, and which we may call his thanksgiving. The gratitude he feels for the precious gift he has received wells up from his heart in the words used after the reception of the Sacred Host, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all the things that He has rendered unto me."

Once Communion is over, the priest, to safeguard the Sacred Species, and cleanse the Chalice, takes what are called the ablutions, saying at the time, secretly, two beautiful and appropriate prayers. If we do not join the priest in sacramental Communion, we should do so now spiritually, or by desire.. Indeed, holy Mass is only carried out in all its ideal fulness and beauty when the faithful unite in feasting with the priest on the new Paschal Lamb. Mass is then a real sacrificial meal, or banquet. We offer God His divine Son in sacrifice, and receive from Him the Body and Blood of Christ sacramentally; and thus we all do "eat in common the same spiritual

food and drink the same spiritual drink." This was the mind of Christ in instituting the Eucharist, both as a sacrifice and as a Sacrament; the one the completion of the other, just as it is the mind of the Church, so repeatedly and solemnly repeated in our own day. There are many beautiful souls craving for the intimacy, the nearness, the companionship, which the Real Presence, verified in Mass with Communion, can alone bestow. They see and feel God in and around them: His infinite mind or intelligence, *e. g.*, in nature; His infinite justice and righteousness, in moral law. They observe His infinite beauty, too, running riot, so to say, in the elusive ideals of art; but they stop short at the realization of infinite love. Can the Infinite show Himself as man; and if so, can "that man eat with sinners?" "Can He enter their breasts" and live the intimacy, and tenderness, and love that Jesus showed to sinful Peter, innocent John, and repentant Magdalen?

The Church says, as Christ Himself said: "Taste, and see how sweet the Lord is." You will recognize Jesus, like the disciples of Emmaus, after all their learned disquisitions on the Bible, only in "the breaking of bread," that takes place at Communion in the Mass.

But to return after the ablutions and the arrangement of the chalice, the priest reads what is called the Communion anthem, usually an antiphon, that, like the Offertory, is but the remnant of a psalm or psalms, once sung during the Communion of the people. The thought it expresses bears rather on the character of the feast than on that of the sacred rite itself.

He then says, *"Dominus Vobiscum,"* at the middle of the altar, and, returning to the book, reads or sings the post-Communion, a prayer, mainly expressive of the gratitude he feels and the thanks he offers for the great gift of God just received. The post-Communion prayer, or prayers, vary with the day, and are analogous to the

Collects and secret prayers, with which they correspond in number and mode of recital. Next comes the salutation of the people by the usual formula, *"Dominus Vobiscum,"* followed by the words of dismissal, *"Ite missa est,"* replaced on ferias and in penitential seasons, as well as in most votive Masses, by *"Benedicamus Domino."* *"Requiescat in pace"* is said in Masses for the dead. The dismissal formula, conclusion of the Mass proper, is followed by a prayer to the blessed Trinity, and the last blessing, to which succeeds the gospel of St. John. The recital of this gospel began as a matter of private devotion; but since the introduction of the revised version of the Missal, or Mass-book, under Pius V., is of precept.

What more appropriate conclusion to the holy Sacrifice than the sublime passage of St. John the Divine, which traces the source of the Incarnation perpetuated in the Mass to the eternal Word "that was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

This indwelling of the Incarnate Word continues in the Eucharist, the most precious treasure of the Church. So jealous is she of the holy rite that brings in this "gift of God," that she does not allow a single word or ceremony to be taken away, or added, without her sanction. Even such a reasonable petition as the insertion of the name of St. Joseph amongst the saints of the canon has not yet been granted.

In its main outlines holy Mass has come down to us in its actual form from apostolic times. Anyone who reads history dispassionately will see and own that the Mass, in its chief divisions, is the survival, or rather, the continuation of the eucharistic rite, as practised when St. John, the beloved disciple, was still alive, the last survivor of the band to whom our Lord had said at the rite enacted in the Cenacle: "Do this in remembrance of Me, and thereby perpetuate My presence in your midst, for behold, I am with you all

days to the consummation of the world." The five words, *"Fiat mihi secundus verbum tuum,"* uttered by our Lady on hearing the angel's message, brought our Lord from the skies in the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation; and the five words, *"Hoc est enim corpus meum,"* uttered in His name by the priest in the Mass, reproduce, materialize, so to say, His bodily presence in holy Mass all the world over.

Words cannot express the gratitude we feel, or ought to feel, for the gift of holy Mass that gives us daily our Lord and Saviour, our Emmanuel, *i. e.*, "God with us."

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Mass the Perpetual Sacrifice

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—We may say that our Lord's reply to St. Peter's impulsive request was contained in the words He uttered on a subsequent occasion: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." "His delight is to be with the children of men." Whether saints or sinners, He never leaves us orphans. As divine Teacher or Prophet, He is still in Peter's boat, ever instructing the multitudes that gather on the shores of time. He is also a high "Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec," offering up the perpetual sacrifice of holy Mass. Christ's sacrificial act at the Last Supper and on the Cross, like the work of the sun, never ceases. The Mass perpetuates the Sacrifice of Calvary till the end of time. Christ will never depart from our altars as long as there are men to whom to apply the fruits of Redemption. This sublime and inspiring thought of the Mass, as our perpetual sacrifice, will be the theme of our short discourse to-day.

Just as the personal, inner, sacrifice of a humble and contrite heart, the incense of prayer, and praise, and worthy motive ever ascends from the altar of the heart, as "an odor of sweetness in God's sight," so, likewise, does the great, outward, and public sacrificial rite of the Mass, the clean oblation of the new law, ever mount to God, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." For everywhere, and at all times, it is man's felt duty to

worship God, to thank Him for His gifts, to satisfy for their sins, and ask His help in their many needs; and this duty and work they have ever tried to discharge, both by inner and personal, as well as by public and outward sacrifice. In olden times there were many forms of outward sacrifice answering to above instincts; but all four are now gathered up and expressed in the unceasing Mass. "In every place," and we may add, "at every moment, there is a sacrifice." It permeates and, if we could only realize it, gives fulness and meaning to life.

When men drifted away from the cradle of the race in Western Asia, they carried with them two things: the knowledge of the one true God and the duty of publicly worshiping Him by sacrifice. Neither of these has perished. God has always raised up witnesses and a sacrifice; and when men lost sight of Him and turned to worship the creature by the sacred rite of sacrifice, He chose a nation to testify to Him and fixed the sacrifices they should offer: the one, a type of the Church; and the other, of the Mass. The same to-day. We have the people of God gathered into the one true Church, who worship Him by the one true sacrifice of the Mass. If not, if we have no daily sacrifice going round the world with the sun, as the prophet Malachi foretold, then we are less favored than the Jews, who had their varied daily offerings, to say nothing of the wonderful Shekina, or mystic halo of light, rendering visible testimony to the divine Presence in their midst. Surely, type and figure are not greater than the reality they foreshadow.

No! The one perfect religion, founded by Christ, implies the one perfect rite of sacrifice. And just as He made provision for His perpetual teaching office in the person of Peter and his successors, so did He make like provision for the continuance of His priestly office in the perpetual Sacrifice of the Mass. This He did by initi-

ating in germ this solemn rite at the Last Supper. The simple ritual, then employed, is still embodied in the Mass; the raising of the eyes, the note of thanksgiving, the great central prayer, and the double consecration of the elements, followed by Communion.

The existence of the rite of perpetual sacrifice is, indeed, the sole means of fulfilling His promise to "give them His body to eat and His blood to drink." How otherwise can He feed His flock with the "Bread of Life," which He distinctly calls "His Body and Blood," except through a sacrifice, framed as a meal? Do away with daily Mass, and there is a dearth of "our daily bread." There is no other way of replenishing our ciborium, but that of repeating the great action that Christ bade His priests do after Him, and which mystically represents His death, till "He comes" in judgment, by the repetition of the divine Words that do the work of the sacrificial knife; *i. e.,* separate verbally the body from the blood. Christ gave His disciples in Communion the same Body "that should be delivered for them," and the same Blood "that should be shed for them," not in the form under which that Body lay mangled on the Cross, but transformed under the semblance of bread and wine, that stay the pangs of bodily hunger.

How few ever realize the grandeur of the perpetual sacrifice. How stimulating and comforting is the thought that holy Mass is never really over; that, when in our own local church we see the lights put out, the altar covered, and the church left empty, when those that joined us in the morning offering have gone away to their daily rounds of business, or pleasure, or work; yet, holy Mass still goes on, nay, that when night comes and the whole world to us seems wrapped in darkness, or sleep, or sin, yet the holy Sacrifice never ceases withal, but is ever rising as an odor of sweetness in God's sight. From dawn to sunset, and from sunset back to dawn, the

Mass-bell is ever ringing somewhere in the world, thus fulfilling to the letter the prophecy of Malachi, that "In every place there is sacrifice and a clean oblation offered, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same."

No doubt, as creatures, we are all bound to worship and thank almighty God, make atonement for our sins, and ask His divine help. Our very hearts, indeed, should be altars from which the incense of prayer in love, homage, thanksgiving, and petition should never cease to ascend; but how inspiring the thought that our weak, puny, halting efforts, in this respect, are caught up, elevated, purified and intensified by the pure, holy offering of the Mass.

To get near to God, to be one with Him, to have Him visibly and tangibly, if possible, in our midst, is the purpose of Religion; and it is in holy Mass and Communion that this union reaches its height and climax. Union with the perpetual sacrifice is union with God.

Who will not, then, ever love, prize, and regularly assist at the holy Sacrifice, sole means of fully carrying out God's injunction in Holy Writ: "Offer ye My oblation and My bread, and burnt sacrifice of most sweet odor in their due season" (Num. xxviii, 2). In the words of "Loss and Gain," "To me nothing is so consoling, so piercing, so thrilling, so overcoming as the Mass, said as it is among us. I could attend Mass forever and not be tired. It is not a mere form of words: it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth. It is not the invocation merely, but, if I dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. He becomes present on the altar in the flesh and blood, before whom angels bow and devils tremble. This is that awful event, which is the scope, and is the interpretation of every part of the solemnity."

Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Eucharist, God's Transcendent Gift to Man

"If, therefore, thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, . . . go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The highest gift that we can offer to God, *i. e.*, bring to His altar, is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. None should dare look even at the Host, the great mystery of union, love and reconciliation with a justly angry God, whose heart rankles with spite, or hatred, to his fellow man. The holy Eucharist, in its two great phases of Sacrifice and Sacrament, of Mass and Communion, is meant to bind us to God and our neighbor in holy love. Hence its name of love feast in apostolic times. For in this transcendent gift of God "we all do eat the same spiritual food, and drink the same spiritual drink." "For we being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (I. Cor. x, 17).

Hence the essential need, if in sin, of preparing one's self for Communion, by approaching *Confession,* the Sacrament of reconciliation with God and our neighbor. "If, then, thou offer thy gift at the altar, . . . go first to be reconciled," by undoing the wrong done to others. "Wherefore let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that Chalice" (I. Cor. xi, 28).

We have hitherto dealt with the holy Eucharist as a sacrifice. It now remains for us to treat of it as a Sacrament. Its main purpose

as a sacrifice is divine worship. The Mass is the central act of public homage, duly offered by the community to almighty God. It is the gift we daily bring to His holy altar.

As a Sacrament its aim is the holiness, or sanctification, of men. Mass is our gift or offering of God; holy Communion His gift or offering to us.

To be holy, is to be united to God by a wonderful gift, called grace, the main channels of which, besides prayer and other good personal works, are certain divinely ordained rites, called Sacraments, that convey this mysterious gift to duly disposed souls, in a manner quite independent of human agency. It is the supernatural link between God and man. There is thus, in religion, a commerce or interchange, a communion between the Creator and the creature, by Sacrifice and Sacrament, a mutual giving and receiving of gifts. We offer God, in the Mass, His only begotten Son, as a gift; and receive Him back with His attendant grace in holy Communion. No wonder, then, that religion is focussed in the Eucharist, and that all else, in the way of divine worship, circles round it as satellites round their sun.

"If thou didst know the gift of God," our Lord seems to say to us as to the Samaritan woman of old. The Eucharist, or Communion is then God's transcendent gift to man. It contains not merely grace, that gift of living water, "springing up into life everlasting," but the Giver. For holy Communion is the actual receiving of the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine. We may study this gift of God, doctrinally, as a supremely important truth of faith, or, practically, as an equally vital matter of piety and duty. By the reality of this gift the Church stands or falls. Belief in Christ-God, as man's Saviour and regenerator, hinges on the Blessed Sacrament. Without

it faith crumbles away into rationalism, for if Christ is merely man, we have a right to ask with the Jews: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Just think what going to holy Communion means. It means that each one kneeling at the altar rails, receiving what appears unmistakably a tiny, white, round particle of unleavened bread, in reality admits as guest the living Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Him who died on the Cross, to redeem and save us. This is "a hard saying," yet it is held with unwavering tenacity by at least three out of five of all professed believers in Christ throughout the Christian world; and has been so held by united Christendom since our Lord, some 2,000 years ago, "took bread into His holy and venerable hands and blessed it, saying: 'This is My Body,' etc." He thus adopted a new sacramental mode of existence to feed us with the Bread of Life. Not that our senses are deceived. We really do see what our eyes and other senses observe, in the way of shape, color, taste, dimensions, and the rest; but these objective sense impressions no longer inhere in bread and wine, but only serve to veil and localize the Lord's Body. The substance of bread, never an object of sense, but of mind, has been changed into the substance of Him who calls Himself "the Bread of Life, come down from heaven." We often see wonderful changes around us—water becoming solid, fixed, hard ice; or, again, disappearing entirely into invisible and intangible vapor. The same may happen to gold, or silver, or iron—all forms of matter, in fact; but we know that the substance of water, or iron, or steel remains under all these changes. It is only the accidents, or qualities, the shape, size, color, and the rest, that disappear, not the invisible and intangible substance underneath. In the holy Eucharist it is the reverse; the substance of bread changes into the Lord's body, and the qualities, or accidents, remain. These qualities, or *species*, fix or determine our Lord locally. Once

they change, fade away, or perish, the Body and Blood of Christ are no longer present, other substances take their place. It is only the substance of bread that undergoes transubstantiation; not anything introduced into the bread or wine. This furnishes an answer to the objections drawn from poisoned hosts, or wine, or the nourishing or even intoxicating effects they may produce. These only occur when the sacred Presence is no longer there, and the ordinary laws of nature resume their sway over the new accidents and substance that result from the passing away of the species, that veil the Lord of Hosts when He comes to visit us in holy Communion.

Some forms of matter, such as light, electricity, or ether, have properties so rare and attenuated as to border almost on the spiritual; but they are gross when compared to the precious substance of our Lord's transfigured and risen Body, that materializes at the words of consecration, in order to become our food and drink. This Body shares in a manner in the divine ubiquity. Furthermore, it cannot be broken or injured. Like man's image in a broken mirror, it is in the whole and in each part. Like words issuing from the mouth, which are heard equally by one or a thousand, it is received entire by all communicants throughout the world.

This is God's transcendent gift to man, "Emmanuel, God with us," in the form of food. Life is a banquet. All living creatures need food to live; but who would dream of the Lord's body as a banquet for the soul. Each species under which it appears is a true Sacrament, under which we receive the gift of our Lord's Body and Blood, soul and divinity, in all their integrity.

This presence of our Lord, unlike other sacramental rites, does not pass away in the making or application. It is permanent as long as the species remain under which it is veiled. It thus means the permanent sojourn of the Incarnate Word amongst us, ever continuing in

person the work of redemption and sanctification. This gift of God perpetuates Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary.

It is God's free gift, open to all. We are invited by Christ's vicar to come—men, women, and children, frequently, daily even, to feast on the new Tree of Life and drink of the great fountain, open to the house of David: "All you that thirst come to the waters; and you that have no money make haste, buy and eat" (Is. lv, 1).

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Eucharist, the Tree of Life

"From whence can anyone fill them here with bread in the wilderness." —Gospel of day.

From the beginning God has solved the problem involved in this question by "opening His hand and filling with plenty every living creature." The earth is a wilderness, and yet life is a banquet, from which none are sent empty away. Every creature that lives, from the mosses and lichens to man, cries for food; but there is "a table spread in the wilderness," from which our "heavenly Father feedeth them." Have we ever pondered on God's answer to our prayer for "daily bread"; and what it means to myriad beings on earth, in sea, and in sky, that go to make up the family of God?

To feed men's souls with the bread of life, His flesh that is "meat, indeed, and His blood that is drink, indeed," our Lord God works a more stupendous miracle daily, all the world over, than that recorded in the Gospel of the day. The latter miracle was but one of the many types, and symbols, and figures found in the Testament, old and new, to prepare men's minds for that of the Communion, or sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ. In the old law, men partook of the victims offered in sacrifice; but who could foresee that in the sacrifice of the new law they should be united in eating of "the body that was delivered for them, and the blood shed for them" on Calvary? We may all now share in partaking of this Victim offered at the Mass, the new Sacrifice, that carries on that of the Cross.

Undoubtedly the real Presence of our Saviour, in holy Communion, thus received, is "a hard saying," and to prepare men's minds for it, we find it clearly foreshadowed in the Old, and forcibly declared in the New Testament. Even before the fall of man, the Eucharist cast its shadow on the world in the wondrous tree of life, planted in the Garden of Eden. Let me briefly call your attention to-day to this figure of "the bread of life."

The fruit of this strange product of nature, as then ordered, did not impart life, but maintained it, by preserving the body from decay and death. Sin alone could, and did, prevail against the gift of God, and undo the effects of the tree of life. Even in Paradise, as in the world to-day, there were plants and trees — food, in short — that destroyed life, as well as a food that preserved it. Man, though good food is still, to a limited extent, a self-repairing creature, who can keep long in health, strength, and vigor; or a self-destroying creature, who may lose the gift of life. That he should cease to live is almost as strange as that he should ever begin. There is mystery in the law of death, as of life.

Whatsoever meaning we attach to the story of Eden and the fall of man, the latter only too visible and tangible in the moral wreckage around us to-day, one thing is certain: that the tree of life was a type, a figure, an emblem, of the holy Communion, *i. e.*, of Christ, made for us, the bread that is the staff of our spiritual life: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die" (John vi, 50). The eucharistic tree stands to-day in the new Paradise, the Church of God, within reach of all. Its fruit is not meant to bestow the new life of grace, like Baptism, or Penance, but to uphold and strengthen pre-existing life. For it is the food of the living, not of the dead. The very imagery Christ uses points to His being the new tree of life. Even if man had not

fallen, it is largely held that Christ would have come, not as Saviour and Redeemer, but to join our nature to His, and substitute the tree of the Eucharist for the tree of life. I am the Vine," He says, "you the branches." Men must be engrafted on this tree to live. He is the true vine, from which comes the juice that is to be turned into the precious Blood. He is the grain of wheat, "bearing grain a hundredfold," that is to be ground into the "bread of eternal life."

Without bread, general term for food, man cannot live, cannot act, think or love. No matter how high or lofty one's aim or aspirations may be, we must first secure our daily bread. Dearth of bread imperils life, physical, moral and intellectual.

In like manner God has chosen the humble form of bread to sustain the highest form of divine life, just as He chose the fruit of the tree of life to confer bodily immortality.

But the tree of life was a mere shadow of the eucharistic tree that has grown up from the tiny seed of the Lord's body and overshadowed the whole earth. This new tree now bends its branches and yields its sweet fruit and cooling shade to all the nations of the earth. The happy indwellers of Eden must have had access to the tree of life, ever fresh, ever green, ever laden with fruit. So it is with the tree of the Eucharist, in God's well-fenced and watered garden, the Church. It is open and free to all comers. Holy Communion, the fruit of this tree, is no rich man's inheritance. The bread of life is dispensed to all who come for it: "All you that thirst, come to the waters; and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat." Holy Communion is a fountain that never runs dry; a "pot of meal," like the gift to the widow of Sarepta, that never falls short—a tree ever laden with fruit. One of the prodigies of the Eucharist is, that like the loaves and the fishes in the Gospel of the day, it increases by division. To share and break the Sacred

Host, is not to diminish, but to multiply Christ, living and present, whole and entire, in each part. A broken mirror does not divide, but multiplies, what it reflects. The soul is whole in the entire body, and in each part, and is not diminished or increased with the loss or growth of its parts. So is it with the fruit we pluck and eat from the eucharistic tree that grows on our altars in holy Mass, and which is dispensed in holy Communion. It is sometimes alleged against the real presence of our Lord in the Eucharist, that there were pagan Eucharists, vegetable gods, sacred plants and trees with magic properties, in nearly all religions. Whatsoever truth there may be in all this, is but a confirmation of our teaching, a detached ray of primitive light, bearing on and recalling the tree of life, the earliest figure of our Eucharist. Who will say that this "transcendent gift of God" is no more than blessed bread, or a mere semblance and figure of our Lord, seeing that the tree of life foreshadowing it was so wonderful, so divine, as to bestow immortality on the very body that partook of its fruit? No, this gift is not mere bread, nor the figure, nor semblance of Christ's Body and Blood; nor His truth, as the food of the soul; but, what He said it was, and what the Church, His organ, teaches it to be, "His flesh, indeed, and His blood, indeed."

And just as the tree of life required actual life, in order to produce its wonderful effects, so does the Eucharist. To secure eternal life, we must be living in grace, robed in the wedding garb, bestowed in Baptism, or washed clean in Penance. Side by side with the tree of life grew the poisoned tree, wherein lurked sin, and Satan, and death. Taste not the fruits of the tree of pleasure, fair to the eye, and sweet to the taste, but which bring death to the soul. Cling to the Vine, which is Christ. If we would reap the fruits of the new tree of life, let us not forget St. Paul's warning words: "Therefore, let

man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (I. Cor. xi, 28, 29).

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

The Paschal Lamb, Figure of the Eucharist

"Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—We have already seen in what sense Christ, in holy Communion, is the new "tree of life" in God's garden, the Church. To judge how fair and excellent it is, we have but to apply our Lord's own test, in the Gospel of the day, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The fruits reaped in Mass and holy Communion, and still being reaped ever since the Last Supper, prove how "good a tree" our Lord then planted in His Church.

It was at the Last Supper, when our Lord was celebrating the Pasch or Passover feast, that He instituted this great mystery of love. The Paschal lamb they had just eaten in common was one of the main types of the new Sacrifice and Sacrament then launched on the world. It is with this striking type of the Eucharist we shall deal to-day.

Indeed, one of the tenderest figures of Christ is the lamb, portrayed on every eucharistic emblem, altar, or ornament. Here is "the Lamb, slain from the beginning of the world." "We were redeemed with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb, unspotted and undefiled" (I. Pet. i, 19). St. John the Baptist's exclamation, on beholding Him, was the expression daily used in the administration of holy Communion, "Behold the Lamb of God, Him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John i, 29); just as it was foretold of Him by

Isaias the prophet that "He should be dumb as a lamb before his shearers" (Is. liii, 7).

Our Easter, with its obligation of Communion, and its custom of feasting on lambs killed for the occasion, is but the great Jewish Passover Christianized; *i. e.*, type giving place to antetype, shadows and symbols merged into the reality they prefigured. The main object of the Jewish Passover was to remind the people of their delivery from Egyptian bondage. To compel the stiff-necked Pharaoh to let the people of God go, the decree went forth from the Lord of life and death that the first-born of every family in the land should be slain by the destroying angel. To avert this calamity, the Israelites were enjoined to kill in each household a lamb, without spot or blemish, to be offered in sacrifice. The blood of the lamb, sprinkled on the side-posts and door-posts of their houses, stayed the arm of divine wrath or justice. In sacrificing the lamb, not a bone was to be broken; and it was to be eaten roasted, whole and entire, with unleavened bread. This sacrificial meal was to be taken hastily, and by the people, girt and ready for their journey through the desert, to the promised land.

We, too, were held fast in worse than Egyptian darkness and bondage, slaves to Satan and sin. Our Lord, "the Lamb without spot," "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb. vii, 26), slain for us by the agency of sinful men; or, rather, consumed in the flames of His own divine love, offered Himself at once, priest and victim, on Calvary; and continues this offering in the Mass, thus giving us in a pure and bloodless manner "His flesh to eat, and His blood to drink."

The Jewish Passover and its attendant sacrifice, as a memorial of the delivery from Egypt, is extinct. It perished at the destruction of Jerusalem, under Titus, never to revive again; but holy

Mass and Communion, as a real, and at the same time commemorative, sacrifice, carry on the memory both of the Paschal Lamb and of our Lord's sacrifice and death till the end of time.

How truly is our Lord in the Eucharist the Lamb of God; He is at once, as His figure amongst the Jews, our pleader and Saviour, our sacrifice and our food. His presence within us turns away the destroying angel from our bodies and souls, and makes them sanctuaries, the homes and temples of the living God.

The offering in sacrifice was not enough; each member of the family had to share in eating the lamb that was offered. So, to-day it is not enough to be present at the Sacrifice of the Mass—we must all, at certain times, share, by Communion, in eating the spotless Lamb offered therein. The Jewish sacrifice and feast of Passover was held at Jerusalem, and annually; our new sacrifice is perpetual, and unceasingly offered up, "from the rising to the setting sun." Our Mass is said daily, and we are invited to share in it not merely once a year, but every day of our lives, if only rightly disposed.

It was part of the divine Ordinance, that no bone should be broken, and that the lamb should be eaten completely. Nothing was to be left. In like manner Christ, our Paschal Lamb, in holy Communion, must be received in all His integrity — body, soul, and divinity. Herein we touch on the resemblance that is the chief wonder of the Eucharist. Our Lord, at the Last Supper, like the priest at Mass, broke bread and divided it; but the body of the Lord was neither broken nor divided. It was only the appearance, or species, that were, and thus are, dealt with. Our Lord is received whole and entire under each element, and under each separate particle. We receive the Lamb of God not dead, as the Jews, not in a torn or mangled state, as on the Cross; but the Lamb in all its ful-

ness, that now lives—the Lamb of God in His glorified state in heaven.

He comes to all and each, equally, in all the consecrated Hosts, on the teeming altars of the world.

The Body and Blood of Christ, made our soul's food, the "corn and wine of the elect," never fail. Under the divinely magical power of the words of consecration it materializes on our altars; yet free from the shackles and limitations of matter, as known to us. The "harvest of the Mass" is unlimited, and inexhaustible, and incorruptible. The food of the Lord's Body is open to us as the ocean or the atmosphere. We cannot exhaust, we cannot corrupt or hinder access to the sea and the air; no more can we to "the body of the Lamb that was offered for us, and the blood that was shed for us," and now within reach of all God's children, in holy Communion.

The manner in which the Israelites were commanded to eat the Paschal Lamb is instructive and suggestive in its bearing on holy Communion. They had to wear the garb of pilgrims, reminding us that we, too, are pilgrims on our way to the promised land, and that we need this divine Food to sustain us on our march through the desert of this life. They had their loins girt, a symbol to us, of the need of a penitential spirit; and, above all, of the spirit of holy continence, as a necessary disposition for union with the chaste and virginal flesh of Christ in holy Communion. They carried a staff whilst partaking of the lamb, to teach us figuratively that the blessed Sacrament we receive as food is the staff of life, on which we must lean for support, and with which we may defend ourselves in the toils and warfare of life.

Through the veils of the Paschal sacrifice and banquet of the old law, we seem to hear the Lamb of the new alliance, our Lord

and Saviour, present before us in the Host to-day, saying: "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi, 28, 29).

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

The Pillar of Fire

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Our Lord's words in the Gospel imply that even amongst the holy and the God-fearing there is a vast waste of heavenly goods. The gifts of grace are more recklessly thrown away than those of nature; and we all know how sad is man's abuse of health, wealth, and talent, and other worldly goods entrusted him by God. Things are even worse, our Lord tells us, in the higher order of grace: "For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Take the spiritual wealth, *e. g.*, stored up in a single Communion. It is enough, we are told, to make a saint, *i. e.*, to give us power, place, wealth, happiness of boundless extent, lasting not for the rapid flash of time, but for all eternity. Holy Communion means not a ray of grace or divine energy, but the actual possession of the source of grace, our Lord Himself. The sun is the spring and cause of all the wealth, and life, and energy on our planet, yet he is far away. In Communion we have the Sun of Justice, the light of the world, near us, nay, within us.

Men have ever longed for communion with God; not a mere abstract union of thought and desire, but a union palpable and visible. They are not content with the "rich man's goods," the creature in any form. Wealth, pleasure, all the kingdoms of this world in short, cannot sate their cravings; they must have the living God. They

want God seen in some material form, localized, in their midst. Now, all this we find in our eucharistic Lord, received in holy Communion.

The truth of the Real Presence is so startling and extravagant as to overwhelm our reason; but faith comes to our aid, a faith, too, resting on reasonable grounds. The Eucharist cast its shadow forward in the Old Testament. We have seen it prefigured in the tree of life and the Paschal Lamb. To-day we shall ponder briefly on a third figure or type of God's presence with us in holy Communion, the pillar of cloud, that accompanied the people of God in their wanderings through the desert. "And the Lord went before them to shew the way, by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire; that He might be the guide of their journey at both times. There never failed the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, before the people" (Exod. xiii, 21, 22).

This was a very striking mark of God's presence amongst His people, and constantly appealed to by them, as a proof of His love, guidance, and protection. When crossing the Red Sea, it was a dark cloud to their enemies, hindering their advance, and a bright light to themselves, favoring their march forward. In their wanderings once the Tabernacle, or moving temple, so to say, was ready and fixed in one spot, the cloud appeared and remained till they were to start afresh. It was, in short, "God in their midst"; and yet God was, and is, everywhere. Now, "all that happened to them, happened in figure," as St. Paul tells us.

Like the Manna and other marvels, some try to explain this phenomenon on natural grounds; but the case against its supernatural origin breaks down. The footprints of God, the masks of His divine Presence, are everywhere, it is true; but He has specially favored His people, old and new. "He has pitched His tent amongst them." "Behold the Tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with

them. And they shall be His people; and God Himself with them shall be their God."

And now I ask, have we, in the Church, God's kingdom, and new people, a tent or tabernacle? Have we a *presence* equal to, or greater, than the wondrous pillar of fire? If not, if our lamp of the sanctuary shines only before an empty tomb, or a receptacle of blessed bread, are we as favored as were the Jews of old, "to whom" all things happened only in figure? No; we have the real divine Presence. Our sanctuary lamp is the new pillar of light that marks the resting place of Emmanuel, "God with us," just as He was when He promised to "be with His own all days, even to the end of the world."

"How beautiful are Thy resting places, O Lord, God of hosts." When the Church, the new Jerusalem, " enlarges her tents," founds a new mission, sends a priest to feed her flock, the first thing done is to frame a Tabernacle for the Holy of Holies, and light the lamp of the sanctuary. Thus arises a new Bethlehem, a new house of bread. Who does not feel almost sensibly the aroma of the Bread of Life, and realize that the lamp of the sanctuary is more to us, in the way of localizing a divine Presence, than was the pillar of fire to the Israelites.

And when that light is removed, and the Tabernacle empty, what good Catholic does not feel it his duty to leave, too, and follow the pillar of fire to another spot in the desert of life. Who would choose to live where holy Mass is no longer said, nor the holy Communion distributed?

And yet the pillar of fire and cloud, like the star of Bethlehem, or our own lamp of the sanctuary, was not to all a bright, shining light, leading men to the divine Presence. For, on one side, it was dark, luminous on the other. To the Egyptians, it was a

source of blindness and confusion; to the people of God, a glittering beacon.

And so it is to-day, to unaided reason and obstinate unbelief, the Real Presence is dark and blinding; but to the children of God, a sacred light from the skies. The sanctuary lamp, the new pillar of fire, is a light veiled or screened on one side like the Presence it serves to point out, glittering when it falls on loving hearts and believing minds, but a dense dark cloud to the Egyptians of the day, "the children of unbelief." Our Lord ever was, and still is, both in the Incarnation and the Eucharist, "the Light of the world"; but "the darkness did not" and *does not* "comprehend it." His real Presence in our midst is to many a pitfall and a stumbling-block; not "a light to their feet," but a very "rock of offense." "How can this man give us his flesh to eat"? "How can he be present in a wafer of bread"? some say; and "How could the Being who framed the skies appear as a weeping babe, or a man of sorrow"? say others. But the light shed by the lamp of the sanctuary reveals to willing hearts and humble minds the mystery of love, the mystery of faith, the mystery of God seeking the lost sheep, and, "emptying Himself in the Incarnation and the Eucharist," the more effectually to bring it back, to carry it on His shoulders to the fold. When, therefore, we see the lamp of the sanctuary, or the lighted candles, that accompany our Lord on His way to the sick and dying, or to the breasts of His faithful, "let us fall down and adore Him, for He is the Lord of glory." He is there as our food; but it is no longer earthly bread, but the Body of the Lord made "the Bread of Life." God was neither fire nor cloud. These elements only masked His divine Presence. So in the Eucharist. The appearances of bread and wine are not God, though they veil and indicate the presence of His Body and Blood. But we are asked to draw nearer than did Moses to the burning bush, or the

people of God to the Mercy Seat indicated by the cloud. He assumes the form of food, that we may "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man" to have "life in us."

Therefore, come with love, faith, and confidence to your eucharistic Spouse and Lord.

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

The Manna, Figure of the Holy Eucharist

"My house is a house of prayer."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—If the Temple of Jerusalem was sacred, because "a house of prayer," how much more our churches and chapels, wherein God dwells personally, in all the fulness of His divine and human nature, and receives the sacrifice, not of beast or bird, but the pure, bloodless offering of the holy Mass. Our churches, too, are houses of prayer in the highest sense of the word; and the pillar of fire and cloud was but an empty shadow, a mere emblem, as we have seen, of our sanctuary lamp, that guides us to the feet of Him to Whom our prayers are to be offered, "our Emmanuel, God with us."

A pot of manna was preserved in the first temple; but what was that compared with "the bread of heaven," enshrined in our tabernacles, to be our daily food in holy Communion. This new manna is our eucharistic Lord. As we shall see later, He Himself brought forward the manna as a symbol of the Bread of Life He would one day leave with His Church, to be the food of souls. "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever" (John vi, 52).

To deepen our faith in, and love of, the reality, let us briefly dwell on the manna of the desert as a figure of the Eucharist.

I. The story of the manna is told in Exodus (Exod. xvi). The

people of God, delivered from slavery, were faced with the spectre of famine in the wilderness; and murmured against their leaders, wishing a return of the days, when in Egypt, they "sat over the flesh-pots and ate bread to the full." And the Lord said to Moses: "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." The strange food appeared, "small, and, as it were, beaten with a pestle, like unto the hoar frost on the ground." The people on seeing it, cried out, "Manhu," what is this? And Moses said: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat"; and for forty years it was their main source of food. "With this meat were they fed until they reached the borders of the land of Canaan" (*Idem* xvi, 35).

Its origin and properties show many striking points of resemblance to the Eucharist. All attempts to prove the manna of the desert to have been a mere natural production, the gum of a sort of cactus, have failed. With the eye of faith we can read into this inexplicable phenomenon, a double divine purpose: first, that of supplying the pressing bodily wants of the people; and, next, of furnishing a striking type as part of the cumulative rational groundwork on which to build our faith in the still greater marvel, the holy Eucharist.

II. The manna sated bodily hunger, and thus supported the temporal life of the spirit within. But in holy Communion the Eucharist ministers to higher needs. In some mysterious way it feeds our souls, and keeps alive within the spark or germ of eternal life. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, you shall not have life in you." In the case of some choice souls, it supported bodily life, too; but its main purpose is the stay of the soul's higher life.

The manna fell from heaven, "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you." The holy Eucharist is described in almost similar terms by our Lord, with this difference: that the manna was cor-

ruptible, and fed only the perishable body; whereas our eucharistic food, the Lord's Body and Blood, is incorruptible, and sustains the imperishable life of the soul. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat it, he may not die."

The manna fell by night. None saw nor heard it on its way to the ground. It came not like rain, or hail, or snow, or any other object of sense; but lay glittering in the morning sun, awaiting hunger-drawn visitors. So it is with our Lord in holy Communion. He comes to our altars silently, stealthily, noiselessly, to be our first morning meal. There is a hush and a lull, when the elevation bell rings at Mass, and in the silent interval that follows, as great, if not a greater, marvel than Creation or the Incarnation takes place. The priest pronounces the mystic formula of consecration; and in his hands he holds no longer bread, but the Body of the Lord; and the people at the Communion may join in feasting on the new Manna, the Bread of eternal life.

Again, the manna was a privilege, reserved exclusively to the people of God, for whose use and benefit alone He had thus "spread a table in the wilderness." Any stranger sharing in it was a thief and an intruder. The other tribes of the desert, and the great races lying outside, had just the gifts of nature, and the ordinary powers of mind and body, wherewith, under God, to secure their daily bread.

In like manner the transcendent gift of the Eucharist was given by our Lord to "His own," *i. e.*, His Church, His own new nation, or people. Others have merely the law of nature, and the powers of reason, wherewith to work their way to life. Where the real Presence exists in the Eucharist, outside of the Church, our Lord is fallen among thieves and is a prisoner. The ark of God in the old dispensation often fell into the hands of the Philistines. So to-day, in the new. Furthermore, the manna was not sent till the Israelites

had passed through the waters of the Red Sea, and set their faces determinedly towards the promised land, bidding an everlasting farewell to Egypt and all its works and pomps, its flesh-pots and its creature worship.

In like manner, the great gift of the Eucharist is only for those who have passed through the waters of Baptism, or washed their robes clean in those of Penance; and who start earnestly on their journey to heaven, renouncing Satan, and cutting themselves off from the carnal, pleasure-loving Egypt we call the world.

Another peculiarity of the manna was its snowy whiteness and its capacity to impart both the taste and the properties of all other kinds of food. It adjusted itself, so to say, to the whims and needs of the receiver. "Panem de coelo praestitisti eis: Omne delectamentum in se habentem."

So in holy Communion. The radiance is shown in the whiteness of the Host; and the white garb of grace required in the receiver. Grace is food to the soul. Other Sacraments convey special graces under special conditions. The Eucharist, in Communion, brings all grace, because it gives us the very Author of grace. It is a sacred food like the manna, suiting all spiritual palates and imparting a sweetness and gladness that often overflow to the very body.

The manna fell only in the desert, and ceased once the people of God crossed the Jordan and rested safely in the Land of Promise. So with the holy Communion. It is God's gift to us in the valley, or rather desert, of life. Holy Viaticum is meant for our last Communion. Once we have crossed the river of Death, Sacraments avail no more; and we join the bright company above, to adore the Lamb resplendent on His throne for ever.

In conclusion, let us thank our Lord for giving Himself to us, not under a form that shocks, or runs counter to the ordinary laws

of nature; but under the form of food that suits our composite nature, of body and soul. The intellectual and moral powers within us are raised or lowered by the food we eat; so in the lofty realms of grace. We become divine, deified in a manner, by living on the Bread of angels.

Next, let us remember that food is to be taken not at long intervals, but regularly and frequently. Let us not reject the best gift of God, and the highest form of "our daily Bread." The manna was eaten daily, and why not the Manna of the New Law. Body and soul need food, their daily bread; therefore, let us eat both, if possible, and be thankful.

Tenth Sunday After Pentecost

Ark of the Covenant, Figure of the Eucharist

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—Pride, in its endless windings and phases, is a vice, that, like rust, frost, moisture, and other silent destructive forces in nature, corrodes and eats away all that is otherwise good in mind, heart, speech, and action. The many good works of the Pharisee—prayer, alms deeds, generosity, and temple worship—were all spoiled by pride. Without this vice he would have been an Old Testament saint; corrupted by it, he grew worse in God's eyes than Publicans and sinners. Humility and compunction, on the other hand, turned the poor sinful Publican into a saint. God hates theft and lying; and therefore it is that He "casts down the proud and exalteth the humble."

Humility is thus the groundwork and cornerstone of holiness. The all-holy God came on earth to teach it: "Learn of Me to be meek and humble of heart." How emphatically He brings this lesson home to us in the Incarnation, wherein "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant"; in His life as a Galilean peasant; in His death, as a reputed felon; and, above all, in the holy Eucharist, I need not say. This divine humiliation of the Man-God is the despair of the worldly wise, "A stumbling-block to the Jew, folly to the Gentile."

Now, Christ God is in our midst to-day as King, Priest, and

Prophet. He is to be met with in all the highways and byways of life, the slums and alleys of great cities, as well as in backwoods and forests; but where, and how? Look at the Sacred Host, as, trembling in the priest's fingers, it emerges from the recesses of the Tabernacle, to be your food, to bring peace, and joy, and gladness to your souls and bodies, and read in it "The gift of God to men," nothing less than Himself. "His own Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity." Herein "Behold the Tabernacle of God with men; and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people; and God Himself with them shall be their God" (Apoc. xxi, 13).

One of the most striking figures of our actual tabernacles, as the home of the "Real Presence," was the "Ark of the Covenant," ever the center and rallying-point for the worship of Jehovah amongst the people of God. Its final resting-place was Jerusalem, under King David, where later Solomon built the first temple to receive it. The Ark, framed of imperishable and incorruptible material, is sometimes taken as a type of our blessed Lady; but this does not weaken, but rather strengthens, the force of the argument in favor of the Real Presence; for, after all our Lady was the first Tabernacle. She first harbored the "Real Presence"; and our tabernacles, enshrining "the Bread of Life," do but perpetuate her functions. The proof of our Lord's presence in holy Communion, drawn from such figures as the tree of life, the pillar of fire, the manna, and the Ark of Alliance, lies in the fact that the antetype must be greater than the type, the reality and substance greater than the figures that outlined and shadowed them. If our tabernacles are only sacred cupboards for blessed bread, then the Jews were immeasurably more favored than we, "the heirs and children of the promise."

But, to proceed, in the 25th and 26th chapters of the Book of

Exodus, a very detailed account is given of the structure and use of the Ark and of the tent, or tabernacle, wherein it was placed. The Ark was a portable chest or receptacle, made of incorruptible shittim wood, and carved, lined with "purest gold within and without"; surmounted by two cherubims, over which was the covering called propitiatory or mercy-seat. It was carried before the people in their wanderings, and the spot where it rested was deemed sacred. Its site, in fact, fixed the capital of the nation. Around it were their tents clustered, and in front of it did they offer prayer and sacrifice. It was their oracle, and from the propitiatory above it, answers were given to prayers, and divine messages delivered. It advanced, or receded, or rested with the people of God, who were ready to defend it to death. Before it the waters of the Jordan parted, and the walls of Jericho fell down, to let the people enter and possess the Land of Promise. David built Jerusalem, and Solomon the Temple, as its last resting-place. The people felt happy when it was amongst them, inconsolable when it was lost, or fell into the hands of their enemies and God's enemies. It brought a blessing to the Israelites; it was a curse and disaster to unbelievers.

How minutely is all this reproduced in our Tabernacle to-day, the center and rallying-point of the new people of God, the Church, God's holy nation, the depositary and guardian of divine truth and worship on the earth. Wherever Catholics go, their first object is to have the Tabernacle, or Ark, in their midst. Around it they group their homes, thus forming villages, parishes, dioceses, whole cities and nations, in short. The main care of the priest is to raise an altar, surmounted by the Tabernacle. Churches, and chapels, and lofty cathedrals are but the tents and resting-places of the new Ark of Alliance, the home of the blessed Sacrament. Before the Tabernacle, as of old, prayer and sacrifice are offered, and all forms of

divine worship carried out. The people flock to it and cluster round it, as the oracle of God. The Propitiatory, God's mercy-seat, the Confessional, is hard by, wherein to seek and find His pity and pardon.

We resent any outrage or injury done our Tabernacles, and would defend them to the last drop of our blood. With this sacred Ark of Alliance in our midst we feel sure of final victory over our foes, the world, the flesh, and the devil. With the contents of the Tabernacle, we plunge fearlessly into the swift dark river of Death, confident of reaching the Promised Land beyond. The walls of Jericho, howsoever thick, and strong, and well-manned, fall before the unarmed hosts of God's Church; for the Tabernacle is to them an invincible palladium, in peace or in war. If guarded and respected, it brings peace, joy, comfort and protection, "salvation," in short, to the house that receives it well; but spells ruin and disaster to those that abuse or treat sacrilegiously this gift of God.

And now, it may be asked, is there anything greater, better, more real or sacred in our Tabernacles than what was contained in the Ark of old. Both were sacred chests with lamps burning before them, but what were their respective contents?

In the Ark of the Covenant were placed a copy of the Law, a pot of manna, and the flowering rod—all three merely types and figures of our eucharistic Lord, who dwells humbly in our tabernacles, awaiting the moment when He can come to us, in holy Communion, as the food of our souls. We have in Him the new Law, the fulfilment, completion, and perfection of the old, to whom Moses and Elias, the Law and the Prophets, witnessed at the Transfiguration, when the voice of God was heard saying to all men: "Hear ye Him." He is the divine Word incarnate, eternal wisdom, source of all law. He is the new Manna, not that which the Israelites "did

eat," and afterwards died, but the "Bread of Life, which he that eateth will not see death forever."

Moreover, He is "the root of Jesse," the flowering rod, the Saviour that budded forth under the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost, from the spotless womb of a Virgin "that knew not man." Thus, the three sacred objects in the Ark of the Covenant were but symbols of our Lord, really present in the blessed Sacrament. We are more favored than the Israelites. They had but one Ark, in one spot. We find a Tabernacle wherever we go. They dared not taste the Manna reserved in it. We are invited to come, not merely to adore and pray before the Tabernacle, but to make its precious contents "our daily bread." The rod of Jesse flowers forth daily in a miraculous manner, so that we may feast on its fruit. With far more reason than the people of God, as their eyes feasted on the symbolic Ark, can we say, "What nation has its gods so nigh unto them as our God is to us."

Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

Elias and the Bread of the Strong

"He hath done all things well."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—How true it is that God does all things well! In nature, grace and glory, boundless perfection, infinite wisdom and love characterize His works. A flower, a leaf, a planet fill us with wonder. He made man's body from "the slime of the earth," nay, He does so still, for, in the loom of nature, the vile elements we trample under foot are being daily woven into the herbage that, in turn, builds up and sustains life in men and in all living things. Thus, "from stones" He truly raises up children to Abraham. The elements imprisoned in the rocks come back to us in wheat and wine, and thus form the physical basis of the higher life of the soul, in which intelligence and even holiness rest. Storm, and flood, and all the terrible forces loose around us, create the harvests through which God answers our prayer for "daily bread."

Nay, our lovely cornfields and vineyards, so curiously drawn, too, from the slime of the earth, furnish the matter of the most wonderful of all God's works, the holy Eucharist, "the bread of the strong and the wine bringing forth virgins," which, in the holy Communion, make us one with Himself.

That the Almighty effects such marvels through the agency of His lowly creature, bread, we have the security of faith, aided by reason. "God ever chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong."

As we have already partly seen, the wonders claimed for the Eucharist were foreshadowed in the older dispensation in the types and figures that were to prepare the human mind for the startling revelations of the new.

To-day I would briefly draw attention to another striking type of the food stored up for our use in holy Communion, in the portion of bread wherewith Elias was supplied in the desert, enabling him to walk forty days, and reach in safety "Horeb, the mountain of God."

The story is doubtless familiar to you; it is told in the 19th chapter of the third book of Kings. Elias, the Thesbite, the wonder of his age, and one whom Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans venerate alike, was a man of stern and rugged character, a typical spiritual giant, one of those strong men raised up by God to correct abuses and bring back the erring people to their Creator. Like our Lord, and John the Baptist, he wrote nothing. He wielded enormous influence in his time, and still lives, we believe, to come again and lead the scattered hosts of Israel to their true home in the Church. The oldest religious order in the world, the Carmelites, claim him as their father and founder. Indeed, "the sons or disciples of the prophets" still live in all our undying monks.

But to return, Elias is intimately associated with the Eucharist, in outline or shadow. He was fed miraculously by ravens; he dowered the widow of Sarepta, type of the Church, with the "pot of meal and cruse of oil that never wasted," even as the bread of life never fails in the Church. But we deal here mainly with the incident that took place when, after slaying the host of idolatrous priests, he fled into the desert, tracked and hunted like a wild beast by the sleuth hounds of Jezabel; and, lying down, worn out with fatigue, hunger, and despondency, he prayed God to let him die.

"It is enough for me; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." He then "cast himself in the shadow of the juniper tree," figure of the Cross, ever the refuge of the weary and the broken-hearted. "And an angel touched him and said, 'Arise and eat.' And behold, there was at his head a hearth-cake and a vessel of water . . . And he arose and ate, and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb."

We, too, are on our way through the desert of life, this vale of tears, to the mountain of God. We have all to go on, upwards, and onwards, to the hill of perfection. "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," *i. e.*, "never stop in the path of progress and perfection." "He that putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back is not worthy of me."

We are followed and met on our way by all the forces of evil. The power of wickedness in high places, the world, the flesh, and the devil press hard upon us, yet we must go on. How often do even the saints, the very giants of the spiritual life, pray God "to be delivered from the body of this death," and fall down wearily at the foot of the Cross. Courage fails even the bravest, at times; but what of the laggards and sluggards? It is then we hear the voice of "the angels of the Lord," God's messengers, our clergy, sent, not by men, but by God, saying to us, "Arise and eat." Eat what? "The bread come down from heaven, the bread given to His Church by Him who, "though man, yet thought it no robbery to be equal to God," for He was God; and who said, "Take ye and eat, for this is my body." "For my flesh is food, indeed, and my blood is drink, indeed."

Like Elias, we find it within reach. It is at our very doors. The "hearth-cake" of the new law faileth not, for it is multiplied like the

grains of wheat from which it comes in the holy banquet of the Mass, that never ceases "from the rising to the setting sun." Asleep or awake, we are never cut off from our supply of "daily bread."

Now, be it observed, God sent Elias food, even by a miracle. He could have upheld and sustained the prophet's strength without the intervention of food; but in His Providence food is the stay of life. He could feed us, like the trees and the flowers, without conscious effort; but no! We must seek our food, and work for it. Such is His will and law. Life is a banquet, and to support it, a "table is spread in the wilderness."

So also in the higher life of the soul. God has given us the transcendent gift of the Eucharist, in holy Communion, to keep up our life and strength on the road to Horeb.

The bread of Elias was ordinary natural food, meant to be taken not at long intervals, but frequently, daily in most cases. It was a rare and unusual thing for bread to keep up life and vigor for forty days. Herein lay the force and wonder of it. It is the same with the bread of life in holy Communion. It is a sacred Food that is meant to be used frequently, daily even, as our Holy Father the Pope recommends. But it is a food of marvelous efficacy, that, under extraordinary circumstances, may keep us spiritually alive not merely forty days, but a whole year. There are exceptional times and places, when there is a spiritual famine in some lands, when "the children crave for bread in the streets, and there is none to break it to them," when a remnant of the priesthood, a solitary prophet of the true God, may say with Elias: "They have thrown down Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away" (III. Kings xix, 10). In lands blighted with heresy and other forms of unbelief,

holy Communion will nourish the soul for long intervals; but where the Church is free, it is her mind, the mind of the Master, that we should approach the ideal state of things in receiving the Food of angels as "daily bread." Christ has left us not a relic of Himself, but Himself in person, under the form of bread that, duly received, will bring us safely to the mountain of God.

Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

Ruth, the Gleaner

"Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—No wonder our Lord called His disciples blessed in seeing and hearing Him in the flesh. The choicest spirits of all preceding times strained their eyes through the mist of ages for the sign of His coming, whilst they had Him in their midst. And yet it needed a supreme act of faith on the part of St. Peter, gifted from above, to own solemnly that this meek and humble Master was "Christ the Son of the living God." His divinity was veiled in flesh and blood.

The same to-day, we are equally blessed with those who listened to the words of the Gospel. Christ is in our midst, masked, veiled, both as to His Manhood and Godhead, under the appearance of bread. The Jews, in rejecting Him, were inexcusable, as they ought to have read "the sign of the times," and thus recognized the Messias sent by God. Though men are now largely convinced of the startling truth of our Lord's divinity, yet, as regards His eucharistic presence, many disciples "walk no more with Him" in later times, saying with the Capharnaites: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink?"

Our Lord did not spring the mystery of His personality and mission on the world. "These things were written of Him" in sacred books and traditions; so is it with His "Real Presence" in

the Eucharist. It was shadowed in the old, and revealed in the new dispensation. We have outlined some of these figures of old in dealing with the tree of life, the manna, and the hearth-cake of Elias. To-day we shall briefly dwell on the wheatfield of Bethlehem as a figure of the Eucharist, delineated in the touching story of Ruth, the gleaner. The Book of Ruth, one of the shortest in the Bible, gives us the narrative of one of the very few women named in the genealogy of our Lord, and who, though a Gentile convert, had the sublime privilege of becoming an ancestress of King David, and, consequently, of Christ and His blessed Mother.

Our Lord came to redeem, and save, and convey the fruits of redemption in the sacred food of His Body and Blood, to Jews and Gentiles alike; and from both did He take the body "wherewith He redeemed the world." The wheat of Bethlehem, where Ruth wedded Booz, the great grandfather of David, contributed to giving us the Body and Blood of Christ, "the corn of the elect," now the most wondrous of God's works, the spiritual food of men's souls. The sturdy farmers and shepherds of Bethlehem lived mainly on hearth-cakes from the wheat of their fields, and water or wine from their vineyards, and it was the blood thus formed, that ran in the veins of the holy family. Christ chose a gleaner of wheat as His ancestress, and a district famous for its growth as His birthplace. The very word, Bethlehem, means "the house of bread"; and not without significance; for from it came He who calls Himself "the bread of life, the true bread, come down from heaven." Bethlehem was a poor tiny hamlet, but the God of the Eucharist gave it name and fame. Ages before His birth it was said of the spot where Ruth timidly gleaned in the wake of the reapers, "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me, that is to be the Ruler in Israel, and

His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (Micheas v, 2).

The golden grain, gathered by the little Moabitess maiden in toil and tears, when crushed and bruised, became her "daily bread," changed into her body and blood, handed on through her descendants, David, and Solomon, and the rest, to Christ, "the corn of the elect," our wheat, crushed and bruised in His Passion, to become our food, "our daily bread." It is a bold thought that brings the field of Booz down to our Lord, yet in a land ever called "the house of bread," it is quite possible that some of its grains, perpetuated and multiplied down the stream of time, may have helped to sustain life in the holy family during their stay in Bethlehem.

A handful of wheat seemed a poor reward to poor Ruth for her toil in the field of Booz; yet, it kept her alive, and in the end brought her a rich return in a happy union with her master. For the patient little gleaner, by an old Jewish law and custom, became the spouse of Booz and mistress of his estate.

Now, Christ is our Lord and Master; and the Church in which we work out eternal life is His cornfield and vineyard. The tiny Host we receive in holy Communion, apparently made from a handful of wheat, seems a poor reward for all the spiritual toil that the labor thereby required of us costs. But, though "we sow in tears," in keeping ready for Communion "we reap in joy." The few golden ears we glean with panting breasts and aching limbs bring us not the perishable food of a day, but the bread of eternal life. What is more, the soul in holy Communion becomes united to the Master of the vineyard, in the chaste and mystic union, called the "Espousals of the Lamb." The Church is called the Bride of the Lamb. So is the human soul in its union with our Lord, at the solemn moment when He gives us "His Body to eat and His Blood to drink." All

He asks as dowry is that we "keep our lamps trimmed and wear the wedding garment of grace when we "go forth to meet the Bridegroom."

Booz said to Ruth: "Hear me, daughter, do not go to glean in any other field; and do not depart from this place." Thus speaks our Lord and Master to us. Other fields there are, promising rich yields to our gleanings. They offered great rewards, visible and tangible, for our labor, and appeal to their success in the world as a mark of God's favor. Sects, and schisms, and philosophies without end, offer even the semblance of a Eucharist, and undertake to turn your gleanings into the Body and Blood of Christ after a fashion. "There was corn in Egypt in Joseph's time, but not from the granaries by the Nile, but from the wheat fields of Bethlehem, house of bread, did God build up the human nature of His Son. Christ has but one real body stored up in the Eucharist, and one mystic body, the field of His Church, wherein to reap and receive it. "No man can serve two masters," or work at once in two different fields.

In conclusion, let me exhort you in the words of our Lord in His discourse at Capharnaum, when He promised to give the world the gift of the bread of life that is ours to-day: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you" (John vi, 27). Since these words were uttered by the Lake of Galilee some 2,000 years ago, time and experience have deepened our conviction as to the truth and worth of His promise; so that He seems to say to us from His lowly throne to-day, in the words of the Gospel: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see . . . and to hear the things that you hear."

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Christ's Promise of the Eucharist

"For thy faith hath made thee whole."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Mutual confidence or faith is the basis of all social intercourse. We cannot live or work together without a large measure of it. It is not merely the just man, but everybody "who, in a sense, lives by faith." The staple matter of our opinions, thoughts, speech and conduct, is grounded on faith. Even when we speak of seeing, hearing, touching, or the knowledge coming through reason, as opposed to this faith or belief, it is only, after all, asserting our faith in the powers and faculties of mind and sense which God has given us. "He alone can neither deceive nor be deceived." Hence, our Lord rightly, as God, insists on boundless faith, on absolute surrender of judgment to Him in all who would be His disciples: "Thy faith hath made thee whole," are words that heal not only the lepers and the cripples, but those "sick unto death" of all the moral and mental diseases of the day. *Saving* faith in Christ is our first and crying need to-day. It alone "can make our leprous generation whole."

In no instance, perhaps, is faith in Christ-God more severely put to the test than in belief in His real bodily presence in the blessed Sacrament. It was a grand act of faith for Peter to say, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God"; but we rise to a greater height when in flat opposition to the evidence of our senses we say that in holy Communion we receive Christ whole and entire, body, soul and

divinity. And yet both rest equally on the word of God. If He requires unflinching faith, then faith is always reasonable in the highest sense of the word, howsoever hard "to flesh and blood"; *i. e.,* to the mere powers of nature. For faith is not groundless. The Real Presence is only above and beyond, not opposed to, sense and reason.

We have seen how men's minds were prepared for the mystery of the Eucharist by various shadows of a divine presence in the many sacrificial and sacramental types of old, all glimmers of "the true light," flickering dimly through the mist of centuries from the tree of life to the "clean oblation" of a universal world-sacrifice prophesied by Malachi. But at length type and figure merge into reality, Christ is born amidst the wheatfields of Bethlehem, and comes to disclose the startling mystery revealed in the gift that is ours in holy Communion to-day.

On the rediscovered lintel of the old synagogue at Capharnaum, we may still trace, I believe, the carving of the "pot of manna" amid vine leaves and grape clusters that adorned the very building in which our Saviour promised to give men "His Body to eat and His Blood to drink." This promise is recorded with startling realism in the sixth chapter of St. John. It is only a promise, the gift came later, at the Last Supper. The day before two great miracles ushered in this stupendous promise, both displaying our Lord's power in suspending or changing the properties of matter, both in its fluid and solid state, the elements remaining in appearance unchanged. He walked on the waters of the lake and fed five thousand with five small barley loaves and two fishes, and yet twelve baskets were filled with what was left over.

Those who listened to His discourse were the men who had actually seen or heard of these wonders. He begins His discourse

by impressing on their minds the need of unquestioning faith in Himself as the Messias, the new Moses; and, also, on the need of laboring not merely for "the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting." He then, in measured and oft-repeated terms, launches forth the doctrine of His real, actual presence in the eucharistic gift He meant to bestow on the world. In bold, bald words that admit of no loophole of escape from the sense in which both He and His hearers understood them, He brings home the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, under the form of food, in order to keep up divine life in their souls. To make His words more impressive, He claims descent from heaven, a mission and powers far beyond those of their great law-giver, Moses, who gave them the miraculous manna of the desert. He would give them something far more wonderful, "The true bread from heaven." The audience, as was very natural, murmured both against the gift and the giver—"The Jews, therefore, murmured at Him, because He said, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . .' Is not this, Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How, then, saith He I came down from heaven?" (John vi, 41).

What is our Lord's attitude? So far from toning down and explaining away the words He had uttered, He repeats, develops and accentuates their real, as opposed to their symbolical, meaning. It is no longer a question of faith or descent from heaven. From verse 40 onwards, it is a plain statement of the Catholic doctrine of holy Communion, as it was then, in the mind of Christ; and as it is to-day in the mind and on the lips of His Church. "He who runs may read, I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. The bread that I *will* give is my flesh for the life of the world." The murmuring of

His hearers grew apace, not to be wondered at, since to the Jews, to eat one's flesh and drink one's blood was the hideous crime of cannibalism; but our Lord, so far from moderating His language, or saying it was a mere metaphor or figure of speech, repeats His words with greater force and solemnity, adding the telling Jewish formula Amen. "Amen, Amen I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you . . . For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed."

Like so many to-day, the Jews thought His words sheer folly; and in their literal sense an utter impossibility. "How can this man," they said, "give us his flesh to eat?" But our Lord's reply, like that of His Church to-day, was an uncompromising restatement of their meaning in still stronger language. A single phrase would have put them right and saved the world and the Church nearly 2,000 years idolatry if they had taken Him up wrongly. But no! They understood Him rightly; and they, and many of His own disciples, "went back and walked no more with Him." They left His school, they renounced His teaching, because, said they, "It is a hard saying and who can hear it?" (John vi, 61). That they were not misled is plain from our Lord's words to His apostles, "Then Jesus said to the twelve, will you also go away?" A question, answered by St. Peter in words, reechoed by us, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life."

The only figurative meaning that the expression "to eat one's flesh and drink one's blood" bore amongst the Jews, was to slander, to pull a man's character to pieces, akin to our word "backbite," a sense utterly at variance with the context. (In Gal. v, 15; Ps. xxvi, 2; Job xix, 22; Micheas iii, 3.)

Only once is the word *flesh* used in a sense obviously figurative in

our Lord's discourse, when He says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," implying a contrast between the natural and the supernatural. His words were to be taken not in a *natural*, *i. e.*, coarse, carnal sense, as "when flesh is sold in the shambles," to use the words of St. Augustine. We still employ the same metaphor when we contrast nature and grace by the words "the flesh and the spirit." He would give us His real Body and Blood not in a gross, carnal way, but in the pure clean way we now enjoy; *i. e.*, under the form of food, as manna or "bread from heaven." "The flesh," *i. e.*, the carnal man, "does not understand the mysteries of God." It is only the spirit one, whose mind is enlightened by the gift of faith, that can comprehend this greatest of heaven-revealed mysteries.

The scene at Capharnaum, when our Lord stood a solitary figure among His faithful few, finds its parallel too often to-day. Let us ever be found amongst those who, with St. Peter, are ever ready to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life?"

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Institution of the Eucharist

"Are not you of much more value than they?"—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The lesson of the Gospel is obvious, and pithily summed up in our Lord's oft-quoted concluding phrase, "Seek ye therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you," a maxim that embodies the highest wisdom and best working rule of life possible. And yet we, too, like the birds and the beasts, must, under God, seek for the "meat that perisheth." But in doing this, we are not to starve the higher life within us. Whilst praying to God for "our daily bread," we are not to forget the bread of truth in faith, and the "bread of life," that are necessary to keep up the divine flame within us. Our theme to-day is the Eucharist, the food that mainly serves to build up and strengthen the life of the spirit, and thereby help us ever to "seek the kingdom of God and His glory." In our last discourse we dwelt on our Lord's promise of the Eucharist; to-day, we shall briefly touch on how that promise was fulfilled.

I. In His discourse at Capharnaum, as we have already seen, He promised in unmistakable terms that He would give the world "His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink." To the wonder, indignation, doubt and unbelief roused by that stupendous statement, He had replied by varied emphatic restatements of the "hard saying" that then cost Him, and still costs Him, so many disciples. The faithful twelve, tuned into the "obedience of faith," must have had the stormy scenes of Capharnaum well in mind when, without any symptom of doubt or amazement, gathered round their Lord at the

Last Supper, they listened to the words chronicled by three Evangelists and St. Paul that gave to men our Lord's best and last gift, His Body and Blood, veiled as food and drink. The marvels involved in the creation of a universe pulsing with light and life out of nothing, or the incarnation of God, in a spotless virgin's womb, alone vie with the mysteries involved in the plain, unqualified statement of St. Matthew (Ch. xxvi, 26, 28): "Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples and said: Take ye and eat; this is my Body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is the Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sin."

The old order of worship and communion with God, by Jewish rites, is passing; and the new, with its eucharistic Sacrifice and Sacrament, in which, as in a burning lense, all the mighty works of God are focussed, is being ushered in. It is now that the words, "He hath made a memorial of His wonderful works, He hath given food to them that fear Him," are to be realized in all their fulness.

The institution of the Eucharist is a new birth, a reincarnation of our Lord, as it were, in a new form, a new symbol of infinite love, seeking union with its creatures, not by sharing their common nature, as at the utterance of the angel's message; but by bringing that assumed nature to each soul singly, that comes duly disposed, to share in the bread of life.

His presence in holy Communion is real, personal, not merely figurative or moral. If only ordinary blessed bread remains after "doing what He did," to remind the people of the last meal He took with His disciples, then His presence therein is much less wonderful, much less of a "gift from above," than the tree of life, the pillar of fire, or the show bread of the Jews.

No, there is no possibility to an impartial mind of reading into the record, either of the promise or of the actual institution of the Eucharist, tropes, metaphors or other figures of speach. The occasion in both cases was too solemn, the danger of idolatry too great, the mind of the Master too much averse to all that was false or misleading. There was no "hard saying" when He uttered the words, "I am the true vine," "I am the gate of life," or "the way, the truth and the life"; as these are expressions, obviously figurative, even to the illiterate. When He used phrases liable to be misunderstood, He was careful to explain; as in the statement of "being born again," or of "Abraham rejoicing over His day."

No doubt the manner in which this presence is effected, transcends all sense and understanding, but so do many of the mere phenomenal transformations daily taking place around us. Indeed, the Real Presence is, in a sense, spiritual. Like a disembodied spirit, or our Lord's risen body, it sets at naught the known laws and properties of matter, space and time. All these apparent contradictions and anomalies proceed from our ignorance of the real nature, both of matter and spirit. To maintain the impossibility of our Lord's sacramental existence, we should need to know the inner nature of matter, and the full extent of the power of God, of both which we know just enough to make us hesitate to assert what changes matter is capable of, and what is either possible or impossible to God.

The change that takes place at the Consecration is not a matter of sense, but of understanding lighted up by faith. When our Lord gave His apostles the Eucharist, after solemnly declaring that what He held in His hand was His own Body and Blood, they neither saw nor felt, nor tasted any change; but by a new faculty, the power of divine faith, they beheld behind the veils and sense impressions

of bread the person of Jesus Christ, their hidden God and ours. They knew Him too well and too long to think that in His last dying legacy, at their last peaceful meeting, and before entering on the great tragedy of the morrow, He should enact the central rite of the religion they were to propagate in language couched in unintelligible metaphor, liable to plunge both them and the Church they were to guide and rule into the most debased form of idolatry. No, His words, as they stand, are either those of a God or of a madman. But to those who knew Him, His strange words did not come as a surprise. They had seen Him raise the dead to life, change water into wine, still the hunger of thousands with a few loaves and fishes, calm the winds and the waves that knew no master, they had heard the solemn promise of the gift now offered, declared amidst the doubting and deriding Jews, whom He had miraculously fed the day before; and now they no longer question the truth of His words or His ability to carry out what these words plainly meant. We are of the same mind. The experience of the ages that have rolled by since our Lord promised the gift of the Eucharist by the lake side at Capharnaum, and gave it at His last paschal meal at Jerusalem, has but strengthened our belief that He is here amongst us to-day in person, and will be till the end of the world, ever waiting in the Tabernacle, to fill our souls in holy Communion with peace and joy and fulness of life. "He shall feed His flock," was said of Him by the prophet, and we "of the household" know what that means. As God is everywhere, and in everything, and in the great banquet of life, generously "opens His hand and fills with plenty" every living creature, but in holy Communion He reserves for His favored creature man "of little faith," but withal, "of much more value than they"; *i. e.*, all other creatures, "the corn of the elect," "the Body and Blood with which He redeemed the world."

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

The Real Presence

"And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—To us, who know that Christ is God, there is nothing strange or startling in the action of the Author of Life staying the arm of death, and restoring the young man, that was dead, to his friends. "He holds the keys of life and death," and surely, He who can breathe life into dead matter can give back that life, once taken away.

Indeed, by a new law of the supernatural order we come daily into contact with a hidden, though still greater wonder. In holy Mass to provide us with "daily bread," words declaring a fact more startling than those of my text, are uttered ministerially by the priest, and, lo! what was merely bread ceases to be so in substance, whilst the sensible properties that remain serve only to veil the real presence of our living and risen Lord. What was before lifeless matter has, by a sort of divine alchemy, become changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

So stupendous a trial of man's faith has ever met, and still meets, with the most relentless opposition. To be able to help those ignorant of, or hostile to, this truth, as well as to deepen our own convictions, we shall continue the line of thought begun in our last brief discourse. It is sad that such a gift as the Eucharist should be the source of so much heated controversy, but it is vital. The "Real Presence" has ever challenged and disturbed the world.

Christ in the host, as when visible on earth, still asks, "Whom do men say that I am?" Our answer is that of Peter, ever voicing his brethren, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God." In echoing this confession of Christ's chief apostle, we merely claim that Christ in the Eucharist left us a real gift and not a few empty phrases, that in it He did not "hand us stones for bread and serpents for fishes," but in His own well-weighted words, "His body to eat and His blood to drink."

The whole trend of opposition to this doctrine is to wrest Christ's plain words into a negative, or its equivalent, a mere figure or symbol, and make Him say, "This is not My Body," or, this is only a sign or appearance of My Body. The use of metaphors for realities is, at all times, perilous; but a crime, in such a vital doctrine as the central truth of a world-wide religion, that would expose the whole race to idolatry; and Christ, as God, must surely have known this. If metaphor can, in religion, take the place of reality, and the verb *"to seem"* replace the verb *"to be,"* then we may reason ourselves out of belief in the divinity of Christ, and for the matter of that, all the dogmas of the Creed, as the rationalists and modernists do. We claim that our Lord usually took care to make His hearers know when He meant to be taken literally, and when figuratively. On two occasions He shocked His hearers by strong dogmatic statements, touching the matter we are dealing with and "the forgiveness of sins"; in other words, "Confession and Communion"; and yet, in both cases, He drove home the unpalatable truths, the "hard sayings," with repeated emphasis. "Who can forgive sins but God alone," said the astonished Jews. What was our Lord's answer? "That you may know that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sins, He saith to the man sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed and walk." Release from disease, the symbol of sin, was the proof

of His power over the reality. So, to His promise of the "Real Presence" at Capharnaum, the Jews said, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" but His explanation was an emphatic repetition of His previous words, "My Flesh is food indeed and my Blood is drink indeed." Nor was the strain on their belief unwarrantable. The symbols of the manna and the vine leaves on the lintel of their synagogue, the miracles they had seen the day before, and His own eloquent words had prepared their minds for its acceptance.

In the words conveying this gift at the Last Supper, "Take ye and eat, this is My Body," there is not a hint nor a shadow of metaphor. "Eating one's flesh" afforded no ground for metaphor, save in the sense of "slandering" a person, a sense impossible under the circumstances. Our Lord's words were understood literally by both friends and enemies when they first issued from His lips in promise and next in fulfillment; and so they were understood by St. Paul and the early Church. The apostle says, "Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." Would he use this language if he thought the Eucharist a mere symbol, a sign, of the Lord's real presence? The few discordant voices raised against this doctrine, such as those of Scotus in the tenth, and of Berengarius in the eleventh, century, were quickly silenced. It was not till the fifteenth century that large masses fell away on this point, and like the disciples, "walked no more with us"; but many are now happily turning back from the "husks" to the "good grain" and plenty "of a Father's house."

It may be objected, however, that the Real Presence, so crudely stated and accepted by the Church, is inherently impossible, and could not have been meant other than figuratively by Christ. But, as we have seen, Christ *did* mean it, and most of the keenest minds, and

what is more, the holiest characters, have accepted it. Leibnitz, representing many outside the Church, saw no inherent contradiction in the Real Presence either on scientific or theological grounds, and yet amongst "intellectuals" he was, and remains, a giant. We know nothing of the inner nature of matter or of spirit, only *phenomena*, the fleeting impressions of sense and of consciousness.

That our Lord is present we are sure of. How He is present, we know not. An eminent convert to belief in the Real Presence says, "What do I know of *substance* or *matter?* Just as much as the greatest philosophers and that is nothing at all."

Our Lord is in the holy Eucharist after the manner of a spirit. We do not know how; we have no parallel to the "how" in our experience. We can only say that He is present not according to the natural manner of bodies, but *sacramentally*. His presence is substantial, spirit-wise, sacramental, an absolute mystery, not against reason, however, but against imagination, and must be received by faith" (Card. Newman).

Indeed, in view of the mysteries in nature around us, who will dare to say that any change or transformation in the world of matter or spirit is "impossible to God." But, after all, perhaps the main difficulty in the Real Presence springs not so much from its fancied impossibility as from the thought that God could so love this sinful, uninteresting race of ours as to hand over the Body and Blood of His Son to be its food; and the object of its familiarity and outrage. But this is to ignore the measureless love, patience and mercy of God. Do we not abuse in a manner the divinity, making God, in the words of the Scripture, "serve in our sins." The powers of mind and soul used in offending Him cannot be employed without the cooperation of God.

Look, too, at our Lord when He "was seen on earth and con-

versed with men." In His life, sufferings and death, God, so to say, gave Him over into the hands of wicked men for us sinners and for our redemption.

If we grasp well the mystery of the Incarnation we shall find no difficulty in its perpetuity in the Eucharist. As it was our Lord's Body that suffered in the Passion, not His divinity, so in the Eucharist it is the species that suffer outrage, not the sacred humanity they veil.

Let us, by our love and fidelity, atone in some measure for the neglect, coldness and abuse shown to our Lord in the Sacrament of His love. Remember that each one can say personally of our Lord in the Eucharist, "He loves me and delivers Himself for me."

Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

The Real Presence

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—How aptly these words apply to Christ-God in the Eucharist! For almighty God to unfold His attribute in creation was, in a manner, bending low down to His works. To appear in this world in Christ was "emptying Himself, taking upon Him the form of a servant." But "the Word made flesh and dwelling amongst us" bends down still lower in giving that flesh to be the food of souls, so that any poor child leaving the altar rails with the sacred Host in his breast can say in very truth, "I live; now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." To complete this divine annihilation, begun in the Incarnation, our Lord multiplies Himself indefinitely in the bread of life, as He did the loaves in the desert, that all who cry for bread may have it in abundance. Nay, more, each particle, when broken, brings Christ personally in all fulness to the soul; just as each portion of a broken mirror reproduces, not a part, but the whole of the object it represents. Each drop of water mirrors a sun, each speck of animated matter carries a life; but a tiny wafer in appearance brings to man's soul His living Saviour and God. And yet, in the descending scale of divine manifestation, "God, who thus "humbleth Himself is exalted."

God in the Eucharist, enshrined in men's hearts, or raised on our altars, receives more glory, is more "exalted," so to say, than by

all the dead worlds in space, or than He was when "seen on earth and conversing with men."

Withal, so everwhelming is the gift of the "Real Presence" of our Lord, in the form of food, that men are shocked and, like the disciples, on hearing it promised, "walk no more with Him." They are even more tolerant of idolatry that turns bad men and women into gods; or of pantheism, that sees no distinction between God and the vilest of His creatures, than of the pure and holy Eucharist which unites the Creator and the creature in lowly union. We cannot, therefore, know too well "this gift of God." As, in its present form, it is often said to be a "mental mirage," and creation of later times, let us dwell briefly on what it was to the early Church.

Though our Lord disappeared visibly at the Ascension, He did not leave His disciples orphans, but in the legacy of the Last Supper was with them, and will be, as He had promised, "all days, even to the consummation of the world." They did not belittle the gift of God. They felt as we do, that our Lord, in both promising and giving them "His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink," did not mean to feed His "little flock" with empty symbols and metaphors, but something real—more real, even, than its own shadowy emblems, the tree of life, the manna of the desert and the show bread of the temple. It was more to them surely than partaking of blessed bread and wine, seeing that in all dispensations such a gift could be had by "saying and doing" what is implied in grace before and after meals. When they went daily "from house to house in prayer and the breaking of bread," they surely received something more to them than hospitality and pious social intercourse. Most certainly they did. The bread they "blessed and brake" and ate in their love feasts was exactly what we, with more elaborate ritual, bless, break and distribute in holy Mass and Communion to-day.

St. Paul voices the belief and practise of the infant Church in this matter. Warning the Christians of Corinth (I. Cor. x, 14, 16) against eating or drinking aught offered in sacrifice to idols; the reason He alleges is because "the Chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the Communion (*i. e.*, the sharing) of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? Thus, it is wrong to eat the meat, or drink what is offered to idols, because we, too, share in our meetings what is offered to the true God. Now what is this food of ours? Not *bread*, no! but "the Body and Blood of Christ." He further adds, "For we being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (*Idem* x, 17). Holy Communion makes us one with Christ and with one another, because we share in the one and the same Body and Blood of Christ. It is the numerical unity of the Lord's body; in other words, His Real Presence under the emblems of the Sacrament that makes us one. "We all do eat the same spiritual food," because we all partake of the same Body of the Lord. If it is not there, or only there typically and symbolically, we do not all eat the same sacred food. Wafers of bread differ numerically and substantially, if merely bread: not so the "bread of life" come down from heaven the one undivisible Flesh and Blood offered up in atonement for our sins.

Another telling proof of the belief of the Apostolic Church springs from St. Paul's denunciation of sacrilegious Communion. Assuming the real objective presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist, as a well-known, fully admitted truth amongst them, he says, "Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord." "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the Body of the Lord"

(1. Cor. xi, 27, 29). Now, if there is no Real Presence, how can a man profane the "Body and Blood of the Lord," since they are not there? Why should He be blamed for "not discerning" a reality that is actually *non-existent?* It is the transcendent reality of Christ's Real Presence that gives force and truth to the apostle's denunciation of the abuse by unworthy receivers.

As a matter of course, such a startling truth as the Real Presence could not have been proclaimed to the pagan world. "Sancta Sanctis." Admittance to holy Mass and Communion and full knowledge of the mysteries involved were reserved to the initiated. So the "discipline of the secret" was in force till almost the sixth century. The catacombs at Rome and other hiding places of the early Christian converts, however, are full of relics that veiled from the unbeliever and revealed to the faithful our Lord's presence in the Eucharist. The very calumnies levelled against the Christians of killing and eating children and drinking their blood, the practices in force amongst heretics cut off from the Church from the earliest times, the writings of early and later fathers, and the words and actions of all the great liturgies show with what tenacity the Church in all ages clung to this great gift of God in its fulness and reality.

St. Augustine of Hippo preached no new doctrine when, in a sermon to his flock, he said, "That bread which you have seen upon the altar when the hallowed words of God were breathed over it became Christ's Body. That cup, or rather what is within, when the hallowed words of God were breathed over it, became Christ's Blood." In very deed the chain of evidence attesting the Real Presence of our Lord in holy Communion, from the promise of Christ at Capharnaum to the present Pope's last encyclical, has not a single link missing.

If we have dwelt at length on this subject, in its doctrinal aspect,

it is to make you realize the glorious inheritance that we possess in having Christ "in our midst." He humbles Himself to the lowest depths, thus veiling His presence under the semblance of inanimate matter. It is for us to *exalt* Him, raise Him aloft in our hearts and on our thrones "make Him King," and fearlessly own that we believe Him to be very God of very God, "Christ the Son of the living God."

Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

The Purpose of the Eucharist

"What think ye of Christ, whose Son is He?"—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—This supreme question is as hotly debated to-day as when our Lord himself uttered the words that form my text. Is He true God, the Lord of heaven and earth; and, if so, what purpose could He have had in stripping Himself of His divine vestures, His glory, and putting on the mean rags of our humanity. Modern thought professes to see no adequate motive whatsoever for the Incarnation, and has lapsed into doubt or disbelief in the matter. From the standpoint of reason, evidently, it is hard to think that God became a shivering babe, lived a dull, obscure life in a remote corner of the East, and died the death of a felon; and yet faith exacts a still greater sacrifice from reason in binding us to accept Christ's "hard saying," that "His Flesh is meat indeed, and His Blood is drink indeed," and that He is as truly present in the Host, before which we bend in lowly worship to-day, as He was in the manger and on the Cross. How or why God should thus reveal Himself to His creature, man, we cannot clearly see, but it is surely enough, even for reason, to know that for some nineteen centuries, minds, the most capable, subtle and acute, have subjected this truth to the searchlight, both of reason and faith, and are convinced that it is both possible and credible. As for God's motive, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counselor." But if true to our lights, we can see a high and holy purpose pervad-

ing God's triple manifestations of Himself in Creation, the Incarnation and the Eucharist.

Reason needs authority, it is helpless without some form of faith, were it only as a crutch. They who began by professing to see no divine purpose in the Eucharist and in the Incarnation, have ended by denying any intelligible purpose whatsoever, even in creation. And not only they are blind to any divine purpose or motive in His works, but, in many instances, to the existence of a God at all in the world. An aeroplane and a microscope, they admit, are made for a purpose, but, in the eye of an insect, the wing of a bird, or the march of a planet, they say nature works blindly; in other words, God, in creation, had not purpose or end in view at all. We thus see that reason to keep sane must have recourse to faith.

Now, faith teaches us, that by a law of His being, God in all His works must seek His own glory. The manifestations of His divine attributes to intelligent beings must be His main end or purpose in dealing with creatures. He is free to create; but, if He does, then "He ordereth everything in number, weight and measure," and "the heavens declare the glory of God." But it is not merely the huge visible world, the *telescope,* so to say, that reveals the glory of God. The tiny and the unseen, the *microscopic,* does so, too. The "might of His power" is as much made bare in the unseen wonders of a drop of water or atom of air, as in sun, moon or planet.

The main purpose of the Eucharist, therefore, is, as in creation and in Redemption, "the glory of God," the manifestation of His attributes to the intelligent world of men and angels. The basis of our faith, hope and love, in the cult of the blessed Sacrament, is our unshaken conviction that herein, as elsewhere, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself," nay, that in it "He hath made a memorial"; *i. e.,* a "summary" of His wonderful works, He hath given

food to them that fear Him." The Real Presence, therefore, though unseen, unfelt, unintelligible, even to our natural powers, was instituted, first and foremost, to promote the honor and glory of God by unfolding His attributes to men.

In itself, as seen by the eye of faith, it is a circle of wonders hovering on the borderland of matter and spirit. It overtops all the marvels of nature and grace, sharing the mysteries of both. It is matter, a natural body, and yet it eludes and evades all matter's known properties and laws; it is supernatural, and yet eclipses all that God has ever done for man in the realm of faith and grace. In all other special revelations, God appeared as active and forceful, His presence was seen and felt; but in the Eucharist He seems dead, passive, motionless. There is no pillar of fire, nor burning bush, no "still small voice," even, as heard by the prophet. In the Incarnation, though veiled as to His divinity, yet was He visible and tangible in His humanity. And now it may be asked, What purpose can it serve for God to shrink into a wafer, embody all His divine and human attributes, under the form of bread to be given to the very outcasts of the children of men? It is a strain on belief to think of God becoming man, but, that He should communicate Himself to us, under the form of meat and drink, seems abhorrent and repulsive to all our ideas of the Divine.

But "God's thoughts are not our thoughts." "He ever chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong." Indeed, we may say that He concentrates His powers and attributes, and thereby reveals His glory in every particle of matter or atom of force. He is seen at work "in every flower that bloometh" just as much as in scattering whole worlds in space. He is the greatest force, upholding and guiding all others; yet He is neither seen nor felt. Silence and darkness mask His action, though "in Him we live, move and

have our being." He is in the food we eat and the clothes we wear, but "His glory is not thereby tarnished or diminished." Why should He not choose the Host as the spot "wherein His glory dwelleth"?

In it we see His wisdom working out the highest and holiest purpose, by using the lowliest and simplest means. Life is a banquet, food is the fount of life, health and happiness. Its abuse brings death. It was the abuse of food in the Garden of Eden that caused man's fall. It is to the mystic food that grows on the new tree of life, "the body that was delivered for us on the tree of the Cross," that we owe our restoration. The glory lost to God in sin was restored in Redemption, the fruits of which ripen fully in holy Communion. It is man, thus wholly redeemed and united to Christ by the Eucharist, that gives glory to God.

Through carnal descent from Adam the life of sin, ending in death, is supported and preserved by food. It is through the divine food, received in holy Communion, that the life of grace, ending in glory, is kept up and strengthened. It is thus that we, singly united thereby to Christ, reflect in Him the glory of God the grand purpose of all life. It is by sharing this divine food that we, in the light, not of sense and reason, but of faith, "Beholding this glory of the Lord with open face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II. Cor. iii, 18).

Again, it is mainly through the Eucharist that the great stream of adoration, of the "worship of God in spirit and in truth," ever flows onward. For Communion, like the Mass, never ceases from the rising to the setting sun; and even when that transient act is over, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continues, and thus the prolonged worship of God never ceases. Our Lord lived to promote the glory of His Father. It was to Him "meat and drink" for doing

God's will in promoting His glory. And this work begun by Him on earth continues in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament. It is hereby that God "has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II. Cor. iv, 6). Vast multitudes of "every tongue and tribe and nation" who would never otherwise enter a church or say a prayer, assist somewhere or other at Mass and receive Communion, thus using their powers of mind and heart in "glorifying God."

In this self-seeking, pleasure-loving godless world, what would become of the "Kingdom of God" without the Church as witness to Him? But without the Real Presence, without Communion, the Church herself were an empty tomb.

"The heavens," it is true, "proclaim the glory of God," but blindly; it is angels and saints, and holy men and women, who alone consciously love, serve and thus glorify God. But they do so around "the Lamb that was slain, and that still liveth to make intercession for us." He is the center of adoring throngs. Now, this new Paschal Lamb, like the old, is given as the food of our souls in holy Communion to keep the flame of zeal for God's glory alive in the hearts of men. Thus the uplifting of the multitude, by contact with our Lord, makes us see the main purpose of God in giving us this gift. Let all, then, who have at heart the glory of God and long for "the coming of His kingdom," share frequently in this sacred gift, the most precious in God's giving, and one that, as we have seen, most promotes His honor and glory.

Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Purpose of the Eucharist; the Glory of Christ's Sacred Humanity

"And the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God that gave such power to men."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—The divine power of forgiving sins, claimed by Christ and left as a legacy to His Church, caused men to blaspheme then as now; but our Lord quelled their murmurs, and moved the multitude to "glorify God who gave such power to men."

The same thing happened when He promised the gift of the Eucharist, as the food of their souls, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they indignantly cried out; and their murmurs and blasphemies against the Real Presence of our Lord, in the gift of Communion, persist to this very day. Thus, the two great Sacraments of Confession and Communion, that form the center and mainspring of Catholic life, have been from the beginning the butt of devil-inspired men's ribaldry and abuse. How can man, they say, cleanse his fellow sinners, give them back their lost robe of grace, and thus enable them to sit down worthily at the "King's Banquet," itself the Mass, wherein man claims to use the power of God to give their fellow men "Christ's Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink." Well, it is done all the world over; and what is more, vast multitudes still "glorify God that gave such power to men." Here in America, in the Eucharistic Congress last year, we had the privilege of seeing "the Bread of Life" carried through the streets of a great

modern city lined by throngs of adoring worshipers, the mere promise of which gift, nineteen centuries before, the men of Capharnaum had laughed to scorn. How true it is now, as then, that in things divine, "Flesh and Blood," *i. e.,* sense and reason, "profit nothing"; "it is the spirit," the gift of faith, "that quickeneth."

And this leads me to put before you a thought or two on the second great motive or purpose of the Eucharist, *viz.,* the glory and exaltation of our Lord's sacred humanity. We have seen how the Real Presence in holy Communion promotes the glory of God. No less does it exalt the honor of Jesus Christ. "He humbled himself, therefore hath God exalted Him." How truly doth God choose "the weak things of this world to confound the strong." The Sacred Humanity, once trodden under foot, "a worm and no man," now reigns in heaven over men and angels with the traces of the wounds received in the "house of those that should have known and loved Him," glittering as the sun. The same is seen on earth in Christ's sacramental reign in the Church. In thousands of sanctuaries the service of our eucharistic Lord rests not day nor night. The angels of earth, "leaving all to follow Him," praise and bless Him in the humble sanctuaries where "His glory dwelleth." Take away the Eucharist, as heresy and unbelief have done, or, rather, have striven to do, and what have we left but "the dead Body of Jesus," and "wise men wrangling" over the eternal question, "who this man was," and where it was "they laid Him."

But though in the Eucharist He still "empties Himself, taking the form" not merely "of a servant," but of bread, "the bread that we adore," yet doth God exalt Him even in this world. He is not dead, He liveth still amongst us in all the radiance and glory of the risen Saviour. Go to a church where solemn benediction or exposition is going on, or witness a "Corpus Christi processional" through

the streets of a Catholic city, or the lanes and alleys of a country town or village, when even royalty casts itself at His feet; and say if Solomon in all his glory, or any earthly potentate were ever received by "His own" as is the "meek and humble Saviour whom we thus take by force and proclaim King." His solemn entry into Jerusalem, the sole incident of glory, in a life of suffering and humiliation, is renewed and perpetuated in His eucharistic life on earth.

Thus God hath chosen the lowly elements of bread and wine wherein to manifest the "glory of His well-beloved Son. Despite the muttering, and murmuring, and blasphemy of those who say of Him on the altar as on the Cross, "If He be the Son of God" let Him come down and show Himself, He is ever the center to which the minds and hearts of the believing world turn, "And I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all hearts to myself."

A great stream of perpetual homage, love and gratitude is ever mounting to our Lord in the tabernacle, from earth's choicest spirits.

It is lamentable, no doubt, to reflect how little our Lord is loved, adored and served; how small the space the Man-God occupies in our lives; how slight His hold on our wayward hearts; how lax, and cold, and indifferent even the Catholic world is growing in regard to the Incarnation and its consequences; but what would the world be, what would we ourselves be, without its perpetuation in the Eucharist? Christ as Man would practically fade away out of men's thoughts and lives, or hold no higher rank there than Buddha, Mahomet or Confucius in the world of unbelief. But, thanks to the Eucharist, He reigns supreme, and receives the honor and glory that are His due in "His kingdom without end." Noble buildings in every land, served by devoted men and women, keep the sacred flame of worship alive, and enable us to see the divine purpose in conferring this gift on men.

Wherefore, although this sacramental state of existence is one of humiliation, and exposes our Lord to neglect, sacrilege and profanation of every sort, still this danger is more than offset by the honor and homage He receives. His sacred Person is even better guarded against outrage than when "He was seen on earth and conversed with men." It is only the outward emblems, not the presence they veil, that suffer ignominy and insult. His precious Body and Blood in themselves are beyond the reach of man's abuse.

They come and go like a spirit. The Lord's body is dowered with the divine attribute of ubiquity, enabling us to receive it in all fulness the world over. We glory in the possession of this humanity everywhere in our midst, and rejoice that we are privileged to do it honor.

Hence, our Lord, in His discourse before the Last Supper, could say He loved us to the end, in leaving with us to the end of time this great gift as the pledge of His love and the memorial of His Passion.

Every day in holy Mass His sacred Body is raised aloft for our adoration, and brought down to find a sanctuary in our breasts.

To none does this consoling action come home more forcibly than to us, who meet to sympathize with Him in the memory of His agony in the garden. It is comforting to feel that the glory, and praise, and honor rendered by loving friends now make amends for the bitter agony of the Passion. But it is specially when He visits us in holy Communion that in the fervor wherewith we receive Him, we can each say with St. Paul, "Now also shall Christ be magnified in my body" (Phil. i, 20).

Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost

The Third Main Purpose of the Eucharist, the Advantage of Men

"Go ye, therefore, into the highways; and as many as you shall find, call to the Marriage."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—We are strange and anomalous beings. We seem to live in two distinct worlds, the world of matter, and the world of spirit. Our main purpose in both, it would seem, is to sate our hunger and thirst. As citizens of the material world, we have daily to seek and find "our daily bread"; and the same holds true in the spiritual world, "the kingdom of heaven," spoken of in the Gospel of the day. There is a banquet or marriage feast prepared for us by God in both these worlds, wherein soul and body share the good things furnished by our heavenly Father. As in the Gospel, however, too many neglect the food of the soul in holy Communion, and seek only that "which perisheth," turning away from the marriage feast of His Son, "one to his farm, another to his merchandise, and a third to his wife."

The picture drawn for us in the Gospel is true to the letter throughout the Church or "Kingdom of God" on earth to-day. From the Pope downward, God's ministers are issuing pressing calls to holy Communion, the marriage feast of God's Son to man's soul. Their main work in "going forth into all the ways of life" is that "the marriage may be filled with guests." Their pressing calls to duty and repentance are but so many urgent appeals to all men,

"both bad and good," to provide themselves with the wedding garment of grace before sitting down in peace at the King's table. And yet men, like children, clamoring for life-long play and noxious sweets, spurn and loathe their souls' best food, nay, "treat God's servants contumeliously and put them to death" in many lands for inviting them to share in it. They cast longing eyes on the flesh pots of Egypt, cry for "the bread and games" of time, wherein lurk disease, slavery and death, and reject the bread "come down from heaven," which builds up soul and body, to fit them to enter into "life everlasting."

No doubt the gift of Christ's Body and Blood, in the form of food, is so stupendous as to repel by its very grandeur and extravagance. We hear around us, and often, perhaps, within us, the cry of the Capharnaites, "How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?" and why should He, even if He could? In answer, we can only say that, in the Eucharist, as in all other mysteries, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counsellor?" From its results, however, we may guess or divine somewhat of God's purpose in bestowing this gift on ungrateful man. We have already seen how it promotes the glory of God and the exaltation of His Christ. As we shall see to-day it is meant also for the welfare of men. We need, in short, this gift of God.

One reason only shall form my theme to-day: The Eucharist states man's thirst for God in concrete form. It may seem preposterous that the creature of a day, a mere molecule of matter and spirit, in the vast world around, should dare to seek, or hope to possess, the infinite God, visibly and tangibly; but man cannot help himself. The yearning for God is there, it is born in the heart, and nothing short of God can fill it. The experience of all who have sought happiness out of God is embodied in the oft-quoted words

of Solomon, who denied himself nothing that sense demanded in the way of pleasure, or mind, or fancy, aught in the way of knowledge or art; "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity."

Religion in some form or other is the outcome and expression of this need of the heart. Men have ever craved for a divine Communion—for contact, so to say, with God—not as an abstract, impersonal, distant, infinite Being, but a near, loving, personal presence as of a friend, a father or a brother. The need of prayer, the duty of worship, reverence and awe are, and ever have been, modes of getting into touch with God. The misery and remorse, arising from the sense of sin, spring from its weakening or destroying this close union or Communion with Him. Nor have men been ever content without some visible token of the Divine Presence. They would have God in their midst in concrete form—in a shape pervious to sense. Now, God in His loving condescension has ever yielded to this desire planted by Himself. The signs and wonders, visible and tangible, beginning with His "walking and talking with Adam in the Garden of Eden," culminated in the Incarnation, when "God was seen on earth and conversed with men." The Flesh and Blood He then assumed He did not take from us, but left amongst us all days, "even to the end of the world," under the form of food, to be our comfort, our solace and our refuge on our pilgrimage through life. Our welfare and happiness depend on our thus living with and on God. The reproach levelled against "the bread of life," from its resemblance to idolatrous rites and pagan feasts, proves our very need, as men, of a true, real presence of a divinized humanity as the very food of our souls. Many who rail at the reality still keep up the fiction of partaking of "the Body and Blood of Christ" emblematically. Empty symbols and mere verbal formulæ, however, are a poor realization of the grand old types of the

tree of life, the manna and the sacrificial banquets of old. In truth, all people need their God in visible form. They will find substitutes in material shape if the true God is forsaken. We have our idols, our God, materialized in the flesh to-day as of old. Like Micheas, the cry of the heart stricken with the sense of God's loss, still rings forth, whether we lose the true God or the idols of our own fashioning, "Ye have taken away my gods which I have made me, and what have I more; and do you say what aileth thee" (Judges xviii, 24).

But our God, shrouded under the veils He has chosen to mask His Divine Presence, none can take from us. He is, and ever will be, with us to feed His flock, soothe, guide and comfort us to the end. We thus see the divine purpose in furnishing us with a means of securing our welfare and happiness, and sating our heart to the full. If you ask why should God veil Himself so, it is because all manifestations of God to man must be veils. Our very highest concepts are veils, idols, if you will. It is God's way and man's need. He veiled Himself to Moses in the burning bush, and the cloud, and thick darkness; to Elias, in a still small voice; in the Incarnation, as a babe and a carpenter; and in His love to-day, in the eucharistic symbols, around which we now cluster in holy prayer.

Take away the "Bread of Life," abolish Communion, and "what have we left?" Wealth, pleasure, comfort, culture, art, the strenuous or the simple life—all the "kingdom of this world," with the glory thereof. And yet without God—God, I mean, near and personally dear, God localized in some visible shape or form—what are all these things but the husks of swine to men, "a thirst and hungering for the living God." "Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of it"; and, therefore, has He given us this wondrous gift. His infinite bounty is our need, our welfare and our happiness. Ask not why He gives, but "take and eat." We

must live, and live intensely, enjoy life in its loftiest and sublimest form; and, therefore, must we "eat" and frequently, too, "the Bread of Life," "the living Bread which came down from heaven." For "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world" (John vi, 52).

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

Law of Communion

"Lord, come down before that my son die."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—We can hardly wonder that the ruler and his friends withheld belief in our Lord till they saw the marvels He wrought. They were pagans to whom no other test of faith was open. And yet, moved by a sort of divine instinct, the worthy Roman felt that a visit from the Lord of life was the only thing to save his son from sure and speedy death, "Lord, come down before that my son die."

How true is this of our eucharistic Saviour also! The Church at large, and her ministers in each field of work, know but too well that souls are perishing by thousands for want of "the bread of life"; and, therefore, cry to our Lord to come down from His home in the tabernacle to save them. He is there to be adored, it is true, but mainly "for the use and benefit of man." Each tiny host is meant to find its last resting place in some human breast. And it is His own most earnest wish, shaped by Himself into a law, under threat of spiritual death, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you" (John vi, 6). The law of Communion is the duty of self-preservation. To refuse food is to commit suicide. Though not generating divine life in the soul like Baptism, holy Communion is indispensably necessary, and, therefore, of divine precept for its maintenance.

By the Fourth Commandment of the Church, fixing and determin-

ing this divine law, we are bound to go, at least once a year, at Easter time; *i. e.*, as usually arranged, from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday, inclusively. It is also to be received as Viaticum in danger of death by sickness; and by criminals on the eve or day of their execution. Apart from the law of the Church, the divine precept of Communion may also bind us personally in great danger of death, *e. g.*, and of violent and persistent temptation, when deemed a necessary safeguard or remedy.

Needless to add that Easter duty is not discharged by a bad Communion any more than debt is paid by bad coin or forged notes. Church authority, it is true, does not deal with internal motives or dispositions, unless, as in this case, they form part of the essence or substance of the act of duty.

Speaking generally, the law of Communion binds all who are duly instructed, and thus capable of "discerning the Body of the Lord." Children come to the use of reason and duly prepared, may now be admitted, and, indeed, are bound to be admitted, to Communion, even at the age of seven. Our Lord's words, "Suffer little children to come unto me," is surely a strong motive for admitting those in the bloom of innocence and childish fervor not only to Easter, but even to "frequent and daily Communion." The requirements in candidates for first Communion have been hitherto, and in some places still are, unduly strained. The degree of spirituality and reverence required in a child should not surely exceed that looked for in an adult, as is often the case. Communion has an inherent efficacy apart from mere accidental dispositions. Infants after Baptism were, at one time, admitted to this privilege, as they still are in the East. It was a standing reproach of our Lord that He ate and drank and kept company with sinners, with publicans and other outcasts. His very touch healed, soothed, raised them;

and drew out the good element that ever lies hid in every human heart. After all, our Lord cast His divine Body and Blood as bread on the waters of life, though He well knew what a dark and turbid stream they form. It is a comfort also to feel it is only the emblems and not the glorified body they veil that suffer outrage or irreverence in case of abuse.

Rare and infrequent Communion, therefore, is far from expressing the mind of the Church voicing her Spouse. Under threat of exclusion from her fold, she fixes a time limit by which death from spiritual exhaustion would result; but her ideal ever is, and ever has been, "frequent and even daily Communion" for all. The Mass is a daily banquet in which both priest and people may feast on the Lamb that is ever mystically slain, and yet in the host "ever liveth to make intercession for us." The fact that bread was chosen as the matter of the Sacrament is a luminous proof of what was the mind of Christ in regard to the reception of holy Communion. It was surely this, that just as the body needs its "daily bread," so does the soul its daily food.

Good food is both a medicine and a safeguard. Two classes of people need to be well fed—the delicate, the young, the weak, the ricketty even—that they may grow and get strong; the healthy and the vigorous, too, that they may retain their manly strength and bodily wellbeing. So in the spiritual life, the imperfect need frequent Communion to grow better, and the perfect, or rather those aiming at perfection, to keep up their fervor and thereby advance in holiness.

Hence, the Church insists on frequent Communion as a duty, she legislates against those who would block the way to it, like the older and later Jansenists. For this end the qualifications for frequent Communion are now reduced to two, *viz.*, the presumed

possession of grace by the absence of conscious mortal sin, and a right intention in going. As nearly everybody, not an avowed or open sinner, claims to have a good heart and worthy motives of action, to be, in short, of those "who love justice and hate iniquity," is not this another way of saying that most good Catholics may safely be frequent, if not daily, communicants?

Hence, we should "lay aside all frivolous excuses and idle fears" and receive trustfully our Lord in holy Communion. Why fear close contact with the humanity of God, seing that we are daily and hourly in perpetual contact with His divinity? We cannot escape His adorable presence any more than the air we breathe, or the world we live in; why then, when ready, should we fear to approach Him under the lowly forms that He has chosen to make our union with Him easier and more perfect?

We, specially, who pass the "holy hour" at the feet of our eucharistic Lord, can plead no excuse for holding back, but rather should make this holy practise a remote preparation for frequent and, if possible, daily Communion.

Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost

Effects of Holy Communion

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who would take an account of his servants."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—What more dismal prospect for any one keenly alive to the duty of paying what he owes, than to have to stagger through life under a crushing weight of debt. Now, morally speaking, this is the condition of us all. Duty is a debt we owe to God; and who is there can pay, as we one day must, down "to the last farthing"? Happily, God sent His divine Son who took our burden on Himself; but the compromise effected in redemption still imposes a heavy liability, and one we must discharge before, in judgment, we can "render an account of our stewardship," with light and easy hearts. Our very good works may plunge us deeper into debt, owing to "the hay and the stubble" so often mixed up with them. Take our Masses and Communion, *e. g.*, that bring the fruits of redemption, the payment that Christ made for us in person to our very doors. What a weight of responsibility they involve! How often like the talent are they not buried in the ground. And yet they form part of that divine capital with which our Lord says we must trade or "traffic till He comes."

We may well, when we reflect on what we are in comparison to what we ought to be, and should be, were we to place no hindrances to the effects of holy Communion. Let us, therefore, briefly examine to-day what these effects are. If reflection on them lowers our

pride, and increases our humility, it will always be so much gained. Man can ward off the effects of the most potent causes. By free will he can stay the very arm of God striving to lift him up. He can suspend in his own regard the power of sun, and moon, and stars, and prevent such giants of nature, as light, heat and attraction from interfering with his designs. He can lengthen or shorten, increase, diminish or utterly wreck the great gift of life, bestowed on him by God.

So in the spiritual order with the sacramental system, and particularly its sun, in all its power and splendor, the holy Eucharist. Communion is meant by God to enable us to increase, preserve and intensify life in its highest form, that of grace. And yet, in all bad communicants, these effects are nullified. Instead of life it may bring death, swift and sure. Like the best food and most powerful medicine, it may but aggravate, instead of alleviating, the evil it is meant to remedy. The sun, we know, both beautifies and putrifies; it kills and vivifies, brings growth or decay.

It is very hard to formulate the effects of the sun in nature, so various, intricate and far reaching are they. Now it is equally difficult for the same reason to name the transcendent effects of a good Communion in the heart of man. The holy Eucharist is not a derived spiritual force, but the very source of that life itself. It is God in us, in all the plenitude of His powers, human and divine, working as the sun in the sky, steadily, silently, universally. Our Lord's living humanity is the sun of our souls, the ark in the house of Obadiah, a center and a cause of all manner of blessings. It radiates and spreads light, heat and energy throughout our whole spiritual being. A soul after Communion is a dark Alpine valley at sunrise, suddenly lighted up in an effulgence of divine light, color, warmth and beauty. What a pity this radiance is so often marred

by dense fogs and cloud. The transfiguration of our Lord on Thabor gives us an inkling of the transformation wrought in a worthy communicant by the entry of our Lord "under his roof," visible sometimes, as in the case of certain saints, to bodily eye. The angels see that soul as wondering Peter, James and John saw our Lord, when "the shape of His countenance altered and his face did shine as the sun and His garments became shining and white as snow" (Matt. xvii, 2).

Our Lord, once He finds His home within our breasts, does everything consistent with our free will to transform us into His own image and likeness. Herein "He fills the hungry with good things," the streams of grace coursing through our souls in myriad beneficial ways, like the effects of food and drink on a starved and hungry body.

We can but cast a glance upon some of the leading sacramental effects of the holy Eucharist in the souls of worthy receivers. The inward grace of this Sacrament is union with our Lord himself, made our spiritual food, "He that eateth me, the same liveth by me." Food becomes one with us, contributing to the upkeep of every nerve, fiber and organ of the body; so in Communion, we are welded into oneness with Christ, the fruits of His at-one-ment coming home to us, individually and in full force. This union, with ideal humanity in Christ, wears a triple aspect. Communion purifies the great deeps of the spirit, whence flow the streams of fancy, thought and desire, that mainly manifest human as distinct from animal life. What a man thinks and desires, that he is. To cleanse the blood is to heal the body. To purify thought and desire is to heal the soul. Now, "virtue still goeth forth" from the Body of Christ to purify the great centers of soul-life. The professions, it is said, impart a distinct mentality; doctors, lawyers, teachers falling into a mental attitude

or way of looking at things that often gets stamped on their very faces. In like manner, we often recognize in regular, frequent and devout communicants a marked impression of what we may reverently call the mind of Christ.

Another aspect of this unitive effect is the increase of sanctifying grace as a means of permanently deepening, strengthening and intensifying the higher or divine life of the soul. Bodily life, when full and vigorous, pulses through every vein and nerve and muscle, so does the Christ-life imparted in Communion. It fosters that relish and longing for what is lofty and spiritual—raising the mind far above the low material standards that satisfy the world at large.

The third phase of this union is the cleansing of the soul from venial sins. The rising sun scatters the fogs and noxious vapors that gather during his absence. Holy Communion is the sunrise of the soul. Its effect on the soul, in removing venial sins, is like the rolling away of a huge stone. Hosts of ugly creeping things and loathsome insects rush away at the sun's entry. Or, again, it is in this respect, like good stimulating food that has a magnetic effect in healing the minor ailments, and thus raising the vitality of the bodily organs.

The second main effect of holy Communion is to aid us in the war against evil by helping us to avoid mortal sin in various ways, and, first of all, by allaying the heat of concupiscence—that deadly tendency in our fallen nature to sensual pleasure and the gratification of animal lusts. Concupiscence is the soil in which evil habits, like weeds, grow apace, the "enemy of our own household" that, if not in league with the world and the devil, is yet ever ready to surrender to them. As experience proves, nothing holds this "lower self" in check, and thus aids us to live up to the higher, more effectually, than frequent Communion.

Furthermore, sharing in the Lord's Body secures us a warrant, as it were, to grace against temptation ever at war against the soul. The very atmosphere in which souls breathe to-day is charged with danger. The grace secured in holy Communion is our best palladium.

Moreover, Communion imparts a savor of sweetness and sensible devotion in well-doing, that is an oft-needed remedy against the discouragement, dryness and disgust for the spiritual life that keeps so many souls from God.

Lastly, the direct effects of holy Communion overflow in a manner to the body, blending, sealing, consecrating it as a shrine, a receptacle, a tabernacle, a temple of the Most High. It affixes the consecration marks, so to say, as in a church free of debt. The soul after Communion becomes like the Chalice or Ciborium, a blessed and consecrated thing, wrested from profane uses and devoted to God. Our Lord himself implies this in saying, "He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi, 55).

Twenty-second Sunday After Pentecost

Preparation for Holy Communion. (Remote.)

"Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—These terse and pithy words sum up what we owe by way of duty, both to religion and the State. They mean that we are to submit to lawful authority, divine and human, under the implied condition, however, that in case of conflict, we should "obey God rather than man," the best safeguard, in the long run, against all forms of tyranny.

Now, one of the main duties we owe to God is to guard the divine life of grace, by union with Him, as the tendril with the vine, to use our Lord's metaphor. But to keep this up, we must go frequently to holy Communion, now both a divine and human law. All, even children that have made their first Communion, must carry out this law in letter and in spirit, if they would "obey their Father in heaven," and the Church, their Mother on earth.

But this highest of all human actions requires preparation, to the remote elements of which I would briefly call attention to-day.

I. For good seed to germinate, tillage is necessary. The mind needs culture for the germs of truth, the heart for virtue, and both body and soul must, likewise, be got ready for the divine seed of holy Communion. It is a plant that will not grow and bear fruit in all soils.

The law of Communion, as promulgated by the Church, requires the body to be fasting and the soul in a state of grace. These two

conditions form the remote, or habitual, preparation for worthy Communion and save us from the guilt of sacrilege; *i. e.,* in this case, the abuse of God's best gift. Reverence is the crying need of the age. It is at the root of all godliness and self-respect. The law of fasting before Communion is enforced by the Church, to impress upon us reverence and respect for our Lord's body. The Blessed Sacrament should be the first food taken on Communion day. Hence, we may not swallow anything, either advertently or inadvertently, by way of food, drink or medicine, from midnight till after Communion. To break the fast, the matter must be what is commonly understood as food or drink; and not such things as dust, smoke, wood, paper, hair, finger-nails, or particles of metal. In like manner, the accidental swallowing of raindrops or snow-flakes, or saliva, or matter gathered in gums or teeth, or a little water, that passes the throat in rinsing the mouth, cannot be called acts of eating or drinking, and do not, therefore, hinder approach to the holy table.

The law of fasting is suspended in case of viaticum, also when the Sacred Host is to be consumed to prevent profanation by fires, robbery, or otherwise; or, in such an extreme case as when one at the altar rails suddenly remembers having broken his fast and cannot retire without scandal. To invalids, bedridden and confined to their sick rooms upwards of a month, who, though not in danger of death, are yet physically unable to keep the fast, the privilege has been granted of receiving holy Communion twice monthly, after liquid food. Those who live in convents or other establishments where Mass is said, and the Blessed Sacrament reserved, may avail themselves of this privilege twice weekly.

Besides fasting, we should in body be clean and decently clad. Poor and even ragged clothes are excusable, but not unwashed

face and hands. People should also try to be in good time for Mass, so as to have an opportunity of making their immediate preparation well.

But the main preparation for Communion is the presumed state of grace in the soul, by freedom from conscious deadly sin, and the actual possession of spiritual life. For this divine Food is meant for the living members of the Church, and not to give life to the dead. Food cannot produce life, it merely sustains and strengthens pre-existing life. The soul, like the body, is subject to this law. We feed the living, not the dead. The soul's first act of preparation, therefore, is to make sure that life is there, by grace: and if extinct, by mortal sin, the lamp of grace must be rekindled in the flame of repentant sorrow and love, secured by a good confession.

If sacramental Communion remits sin in one sincerely believing himself free from it, and so approaching in good faith, the effect thus caused of restoring spiritual life is purely accidental. To receive in a state of conscious grievous sin, however, would ever be a heinous crime of sacrilege—the thrusting the Body and the Blood of Christ "into the pit."

Conscious reconciliation of the sin-stained soul with God is an essential, *the* essential part of our preparation. This is taught us by our Lord in the parables of the foolish virgins, and of the man found at the great supper without the wedding robe. The foolish virgins, who let their lamps of grace die out, were shut out from the marriage feast; and the man who dared to sit down at the banquet without the wedding garment was "thrust into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Paul, likewise, enforces the solemn need of conscious worthiness, when, after denouncing sacrilegious Communion, he adds,

"But let a man prove (*i. e.*, prepare) himself; and so let him eat of that bread" (I. Cor. xi, 27). Hence, if we have lost the garb of baptismal grace, we must have it restored in the saving waters of Penance.

So rigidly does the Church enforce this form of preparation for Communion, that in the case of the faithful at large she very rarely exempts from Confession, as a pledge or means of securing it. We may, and indeed, are bound, to regain lost grace by perfect sorrow; but, withal, we cannot go to Communion without confession. "Go show yourselves to the priests." The only case in which this law ceases, is in danger of profanation of the host by robbers or others; danger of death, when, *e. g.*, there is no priest to hear Confession, but a deacon to administer Communion; danger of scandal, as when one cannot withdraw publicly from altar rails without risk of self-defamation. The remembrance of doubtful or forgotten sins need not disturb one's peace after an otherwise good and sincere confession. The law requiring confession was made to guard the Sacrament against abuse and remind us that we cannot be overweeningly sure of self-obtained forgiveness of sin, or hold that faith alone, as Luther held, is sufficient preparation for the reception of the Eucharist.

Without this well-assured conviction of immunity from sin the Bread of life might become a sentence of death; and the all-holy Body of Christ might be introduced, not into a loving heart, but a foul or "whited sepulchre filled with dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Is too much asked for so lofty a favor? Who would sit down to table with even travelers at an inn in dust-soiled clothes and unwashed hands? What elaborate preparations in house and person do we make to receive even humble guests like ourselves. Shall we deem it a burden, then, to wash our souls

clean, in the Blood of the Lamb poured over them in Confession? All may come, the poor, the outcast, the lowest, if only robed in grace, to be had by only asking pardon in the Sacrament of Penance. No wealth, no titles, no gorgeous raiment or glittering pearls are needed, but simply the favor and love of our Father in heaven.

The best preparation, however, is to keep always in grace by keeping always out of deadly sin. This, with a good worthy motive, is all we need to sit down at the divine banquet, prepared for us by the "King of kings and Lord of rulers."

Twenty-third Sunday After Pentecost

Preparation for Holy Communion. (Immediate.)

"If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—Grace, healing, consolation, life even, streamed from our Lord's person. For, "Virtue went forth from Him and healed all." The same is true to-day within the radiance of the lamp of our sanctuaries.

If the poor woman of the gospel deemed it a privilege to draw near and touch the hem of His garment, what of those who receive Him "into their house?" nay, who draw near to Him in that ineffable union denoted in His own words, "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me; for my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed."

Can any form of preparation be too elaborate for the reception of such a guest? Just think of the pomp, splendor and ceremonial displayed in welcoming those who, by the mere accident of birth, fortune or ability, are deemed great; and yet shrouded in the tiny wafer that trembles in the priest's fingers there comes to you in holy Communion as guest "a greater than they," nay the God-man, whom myriads of awe-struck angels adore and glorify. But "God is for us all," and He minds not outward show, if only the heart of the receiver is pure and loving. "The beauty of the King's daughter," *i. e.*, the human soul, "is within."

If He finds no conscious unworthiness—just the "state of grace and right intention" required by the Church—He is content to

make of our hearts "a house wherein His glory dwelleth"; but out of loving gratitude we should do more. Let us all come, "just as we are," but inwardly, at least, at our best.

We deal, therefore, to-day with the immediate preparation for the sublime act of holy Communion. Though not essential, like the remote preparation dealt with in our last, it is of very great importance. The former saves us from the sin of sacrilege; but the actual state of soul when receiving, created by our immediate preparation, determines the fruit we reap. "By their fruits you shall know them," holds true of our Communions as of other spiritual exercises. To benefit by good food, it is not enough merely to be alive: a great deal depends on health and appetite. Now, life in its highest, purest and holiest form depends on our Communions —our spiritual meals. Materialists at their worst "live to eat," so should we, spiritualists, at our best. "He who eateth me the same also shall live by me" (John vi, 58), says our Lord, speaking of those "who would grow into the likeness of Christ." But there is growth and growth, there is a growth sometimes that seems decay. How few, even daily communicants, seem to grow spiritually stronger as they grow older. They live in and by the Spirit, it is true: they "walk before God," but are they, therefore, "perfect?" It is fervent Communion, not a negligent nor slovenly one, that will make a saint. Now, a fervent Communion is one for which we prepare well by the exercise of the powers of our soul, in getting ready, just as we create a healthy appetite and readiness for our meals by bodily exercise. For, though the Bread of Life acts as food and medicine, by virtue of its own inherent excellence, and quite independently of the faith, fervor and other subjective conditions of the receiver; yet, as in the case of the body, on the state of the soul when receiving largely depends the result. Life-giving rain makes

little impression on a dry and barren rock; whilst it enriches well-tilled ground. The best and choicest seed must find congenial soil. An ice-bound heart will stay the action of the sun, in grace, as in nature.

But coming to details, how are we to get actually ready for holy Communion? It may be observed that they find this immediate preparation easiest who are best prepared, remotely and habitually. They live with our Lord, as it were, are ever careful to shun what might unfit them to appear when summoned to the presence of the royal Master. Theirs is an atmosphere of divine love, and we know that eloquent words and fervent outpourings of the heart never fail when those who truly love meet face to face.

Moreover, the acts immediately preceding Communion must vary considerably with the class of persons who receive. A great personage never expects a stereotyped welcome at all places and from all people.

Whether simply or elaborately, we have all to "Prepare the way of the Lord." The nosegays and garlands of wild flowers, picked by the children and poor people on the hills and roadsides for their village church, are as pleasing, if not more pleasing, to Him than the rich and showy products of gardens and hothouses. Let only our offerings of mind and affection be true, sincere and loyal, and it matters little whether they come from a prayer-book, a set of rosary beads, or straight from the heart.

Now, just as a certain amount of time is needed to dress, or get otherwise ready for a banquet, or a wedding, or a reception, so must we devote some space of time to our immediate preparation; if possible, a quarter of an hour at least. The advantage of receiving in the Mass is that we not only join in the priest's Communion,

as the Church desires, but have plenty of time for our immediate preparation also.

The first thing to do, by the way of putting our souls in readiness for this sublime act, is to secure "purity of intention," as the decree in frequent and daily Communion requires. Like Moses on approaching God in the burning bush, we must remove the very shoes of worldliness from off our feet, by excluding from the heart all unworthy motives, such as human respect, mere habit or routine, fear, favor, or any worldly object whatsoever, and have, as our main purpose, the desire "to please God, to be united with Him, and to use this holy Sacrament as a divine medicine to cure our spiritual infirmities and remedy our defects."

To this cleansing of our motives, shaped into an act of "offering," we should add acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition and desire, produced, if possible, by our own mental efforts; or, failing this, read out of a book. If we cannot even do this, we can surely, at least, by thoughtful repetition, suck the honeycombs of the "our Father," "the Hail Mary," or "the Creed," and thus work up our souls into that state of actual devotion, which forms the essence of the immediate preparation for Communion.

When the bell rings for Communion, we should proceed to the altar rail, modestly and devoutly, join in the *Confiteor*, or general Confession made in our name by the server. With the general absolution given by the priest this contrite and open Confession of sin, though only a sacramental, yet remits venial sin.

Whilst receiving Communion, we should keep our eyes cast down, the head held firmly up, and the mouth open, with the tongue resting on the lower lip, so as to facilitate the introduction of the Sacred Host. On receiving Communion, we should withdraw the tongue, moisten the sacred particle, which we must take care to swallow

and not allow to melt away in the mouth. Whether we receive accidentally two particles, or only a portion of one, makes no difference. In either case our Lord visits us in all His fulness. We should then retire to our place to make our thanksgiving, about which we shall speak in our next brief discourse

Twenty-fourth Sunday After Pentecost

Thanksgiving After Holy Communion

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The parables enshrined in the gospel of the day aptly illustrate the growth and action of the Eucharist. The tiny seedling of the Cenacle is now "the Tree of Life" to the Church at large. In and under its branches, we all find shelter. It is the leaven of God's kingdom and, planted in our own breasts, spreads throughout our whole spiritual being, welding all the powers of our soul into union with, and subjection to, Christ. But seed has to be cared for when sown, the leaven to permeate the mass has to be carefully kneaded into the dough; and so have we to look carefully after the great gift, planted by holy Communion, in our breasts. And this thought leads me to say a few words to-day on the duty of thanksgiving after holy Communion.

I. It is not enough to prepare for our guests, we must entertain them when they come. Our Lord's bodily stay in holy Communion is short, and our welcome must be proportionately cordial and fervent. The few minutes He tarries in our breasts are the most sacred and solemn of life. The visit of a sovereign is often recorded in lasting monuments of stone or bronze; but the Lord of the world comes daily even to His chosen ones, silently and unobtrusively. Yet He traces an image of Himself in the fervent soul that will never perish. He comes noiselessly as the manna, as the

dew or the rain, or the soft breezes from the sea; but, like them, His visit is life-giving and enduring. We owe God a deep debt of inward gratitude and outward thanksgiving for His gifts in nature and in grace; shall our hearts be cold and our lips mute when the "Great giver of every good and perfect gift" comes to us in person, under the form of food, thus enabling each one to say with literal truth, "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii, 20).

He comes to us laden with gifts, saying to us singly, as to blind Bartimaeus, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee," or to Zacchaeus, "This day I must abide in thy house," "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix, 6-9).

How many, alas! even of "His own," communicate coldly, distractedly, if not irreverently, admitting Him, so to say, as an unwelcome or embarrassing guest whom they try to get rid of by a few curt, cold and formal phrases, read out of a book, or said by rote on the tongue, whilst "the heart is far from Him."

Now, thanksgiving after Communion, apart from being the natural and spontaneous expression of gratitude for the highest possible favor that the Creator can bestow on the creature, is a matter of supreme importance to ourselves personally. It is the main source of the soul's health and wealth. In our own interest even, we must not be like the ungrateful lepers, who "failed to return and give thanks to God." Let us not be as Judas, who rose at once and left the holy table; but rather like John, who lingered long and lovingly on our Saviour's breast.

As after meals the body needs some time to rest, so does the soul after its spiritual and supernatural Food in holy Communion. Though the time spent in thanksgiving is not fixed, yet he custom of devout souls extends it to a quarter of an hour at least. Any-

thing less, except time presses urgently, would border on irreverence. The first impulse of the heart, on returning to our place, after receiving the Sacred Host, will be to bend low in humble adoration, cast ourselves in spirit at our Lord's feet, and, like Magdalen, pour forth the fragrant perfume of the heart's best welcome. Beautiful thoughts and loving salutations will arise unbidden to the lips and give ardent expression to our feelings. "I have found Him whom my heart loveth, I shall hold Him and will not let Him go." "My beloved to me, and I to my beloved." "Thou knowest, Lord, that I love thee," or St. Theresa's simple but telling phrase, "My Lord and my All."

Some such spontaneous outburst of welcome over, we should make a formal act of thanksgiving, either by heart, or from our prayer-book. There is, usually, no lack therein of very choice and touching prayers to help us out in the duty of thanking God for the greatest gift in His treasury. The main formulae of thanksgiving, copying the natural movements of the heart, usually crystallize into acts of adoration, thanksgiving proper, love and petition.

As the first instinct of the creature brought into such close contact with the Creator, is that of worship, or adoration, we shall fall at our Lord's feet and, like the shepherds and magi at Bethlehem, "adore our new-born King." In Communion we are not stricken with the awe inspired by Him who rules the skies, but filled with wonder and tender love of Him who comes under such lowly form as food and drink, to unite us more closely to Himself and make us one with Him.

Our act of adoration will next melt away into feelings of deep gratitude to our divine Guest for deigning this day "to enter under our roof," laden with gifts that can alone sate the boundless hunger and quench the burning thirst of a heart made for God;

and restless as the sea till that supreme object is attained. We pant and pine for pleasure, and peace, and plenty, for the creature: in short, the mere shadow and emblem of the divine beauty, and we are deeply grateful for even a small measure, a mere drop of water to allay our burning thirst for the "mere good things of life," and yet in holy Communion we have the boundless oceans of supreme and lasting good. Shall we not be grateful and call on all creatures to thank God for us? "All ye works of the Lord praise and exalt Him, above all, forever." "My soul thirsteth for the strong living God." "As the hunted stag panteth after the fountains of water, so doth my soul long for Thee, O God."

Our thanksgiving next reaches its climax, so to say, in deep and oft-repeated acts of love. Acts of adoration and gratitude are to love as smoke and kindling to the flame that follows. Who, indeed, can remain cold enough and unmoved in presence of a God, who comes down so low, to raise us up so high? For the supreme Being to take any notice of us at all, to be kind to us, to love us, as children, even, is supreme condescendence that should ravish us with love; but, that He should give us singly the Body and Blood wherewith He redeemed us, under the form of food, to weld us into union with Himself, should make our very hearts languish, nay, burn with love. He gives Himself to us without reserve, and so should we in perfect self-surrender dedicate ourselves lovingly to Him. All is His already, so that this poor love of ours is but an act of plain common justice—merely just love. We must, therefore, enthrone Him in our hearts and pledge ourselves never to let any creature usurp the supreme place in our hearts reserved to God alone.

But, as our needs are many and pressing, our act of thanksgiving will die away into that act of holy selfishness, called the prayer of

petition. To be true, faithful, and loyal to God, to win eternal life, we need His gracious help. We perish without His staying arm. Now is the time to lay bare our wants, to ask for an increase and strengthening within us of faith, hope, charity and abiding sorrow for sin: to pray for "the peace of Jerusalem," the Church, God's witness and agent and our own Mother in this sinful, unbelieving world. It is a hard battle, we know, for most of us to keep body and soul together, to earn a living and pay our way in the world; but it is a harder battle still, to keep in the grace of God, to lead holy lives and save our souls. Now, no greater help herein, than well-made Communions, *i. e.*, Communions for which we prepare well beforehand, and after which we linger behind a little in holy thanksgiving.

Twenty-fifth and Last Sunday After Pentecost

Fruits of Holy Communion

"For as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."—Gospel of day.

Introduction.—The best preparation for our Lord's coming in judgment is to meet Him now, in peace, in the confessional, and in love, in holy Communion. The fear of God, it is true, is the beginning of wisdom; but "Love casteth out fear." For if we can meet and embrace our Lord serenely and peacefully in the Sacrament of His love, we need not fear to face Him in judgment, even though "the stars should fall from heaven and the powers thereof should be moved." A frequent and fervent communicant, careful in his preparation and thanksgiving, is one "who judges himself here that he may not be judged hereafter."

But, "from the fig-tree we must learn a parable." "The tree is judged, not by its leaves, but by its fruit." We may say of our Communions as of everything else, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Many a tree, alas! laden with Masses and Communions, fair, perhaps, to the eye in the vineyard of the Lord, has yet been "cut down and cast into the fire." The worthy communicant, therefore, like a good tree, is known by his fruits. We justly expect a frequent and fervent communicant ever to uphold the supernatural life, to be strong in the battle against evil and live habitually united with Christ. Let us now briefly dwell on this triple fruit of holy Communion.

Christ's mission was to give life and give it more abundantly. What force there is in the expression, "the living God"; "God is the God of the living, not of the dead." Life even in its lowest forms comes from antecedent life, ultimately from God. But the life that Christ came to bestow, the vital flame He came to enkindle, is the supernatural life of grace. Like all other forms of life, it has to be upheld, kept in activity by food; and the highest form of this food, like the life it supports, is the divine nourishment received in holy Communion. For it was not man, but God who said, "I am the bread of life," "I am the living bread come down from heaven"; "He who eateth me, the same also liveth by me." Now all life, as we know it, is spent in a searching for bread. Living beings must get it or perish. Everything that hath life "seeks the Lord,—prays in its own dumb way for its 'daily bread.'" "Every flower that bloometh" must, in its own manner, eat to live. The hum and bustle and activity that mark off life from death are but cries for bread. It is the basis on which, even in man, his bodily, mental and moral life are reared. Life ceases with famine.

God, no doubt, could have found a stay for the spiritual life without the new Manna we receive in holy Communion; but in His wisdom and goodness He decreed otherwise, and has given us, in the form of bread, "His body to eat and His blood to drink," to each and all in equal measure. Now what should be the fruit of good food, in divinely portioned quantity, if not a marked and vigorous vitality? The body and its flesh perish; but the soul that feeds on the Eucharist will live forever by the life, upheld by the food that Christ came to bestow. We expect, and rightly expect, good food to make people healthy, fit for work and active service when called upon: in like manner, the Eucharist. If one's spiritual vitality

is low; if a man is feeble, weak, unfit for work in the Lord's vineyard; if he loses grace, shows no signs of a vigorous spiritual life; if his spiritual temperature keeps ever falling, it is a sign that his Communions are not producing good fruit. The fault, we may be sure, does not spring from lack of efficacy in the "Bread come down from heaven," but in the capacity and conditions of the receiver. The Tree of Life did not prevent the entrance of death, no more does the Bread of Life, the eucharistic Manna, guarantee the soul from spiritual decay and death. In certain soils, the best and choicest seeds do but wither away and perish. The very first fruit of our Communion, therefore, should be "life and abundance of life."

Furthermore, we look in worthy communicants for strength against evil as a fruit of their Communions. A good communicant should be as "the strong man armed," whose possessions are in peace, one who is master in his own house, lord over his passions, strong against temptation,—not likely to yield on any evil suggestion or fall an easy prey to the snares and attractions of his spiritual foes. For Communion, by its very nature, instils a divine force that should make us almost proof against relapse. Hence the shock with which even hopeless sensualists hear of scandals amongst the clergy, or religious, or devout laity. They can hardly believe that regular and frequent communicants are capable of moral death. They deem the Sacrament a sort of charm or palladium against spiritual weakness. And such, indeed, it is, if used right. For the Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults, and preserved from deadly sin"; and the recent decree on frequent Communion names it "A divine remedy for our weakness and defects." Nor can we wonder, for it puts Christ, the conqueror of Satan, at our disposal. When visi-

ble on earth, the devils fled at His approach; disease vanished at His look and touch. Is His arm shortened or are his mercies diminished? Is His presence in the flesh less powerful over souls and bodies to-day than it was then? If our Communions bear not fruit, in not imparting firmness and strength of character; if we are but frail, tiny barks without rudder or sail, tossed about in all directions on the sea of life, at the mercy of the winds and waves, it is a sign that our Lord sleeps within us, that our hearts are but as a tomb to Him, not a living dwelling.

Lastly, can anyone say that we have not a right to look for this vitality and strength, this healthy spiritual tone, as visible marks, and, therefore, as the fruit of our close union with Christ in holy Communion. One who receives Christ "frequently or daily" should be habitually one with Him. Are we such in inward and outward bearing, in the life of thought, speech and conduct, that men on observing us could say, there is a friend and companion, there, in short, is a true disciple of Jesus. We know and judge a man by the company he keeps. We grow insensibly into each others likeness. Whole nations have marked types of features, through long companionship. Is it so with us and our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? If not, there is something that needs looking to in our Communions. He would be "one with us," He came to us racially in the Incarnation, and brings that same close personal union to each one of us singly in Communion. It is for us to blend and fuse into His likeness. There are metals that no force can unite; chemical elements that will never blend; so there are characters, that apparently united, are in mind, heart and action, as far asunder as the poles. Judas and John were both communicants and companions of the Lord; but how different the fruits of this union in them. There are trees that show great wealth of leaf and branch,

but in which you vainly seek for fruit. Be it ours, as we feed on the Tree of Life, ever to show forth good fruit in keeping ever alive in grace, strong against evil, and ever walking in the steps of Him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

First Sunday of Advent

The Abiding Presence

"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction. When our Lord, to the horror and amazement of His own followers, promised at Capharnaum to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink, and when later He actually at Jerusalem took bread and wine and changed them by the power of His word into "the body that was to be delivered for them, and the blood that was to be shed for them on the morrow," and solemnly enjoined on them to do the same; *i. e.,* repeat His transforming, divine, action, did His words "pass away?" Have they remained idle and sterile? No; "the truth of God abideth forever." Christ's words have not "passed away" with the breath that uttered them. Holy Mass is said and Communion given all over the world, wherever the sun shines. Our Emmanuel, *i. e.,* "God with us," is not merely present in His divinity, pervading all things by His essence, presence and power; but in the perpetuity and continuation of His incarnate presence, when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." In that new form of divine presence, "He has not left us orphans"; but, under the semblance of "Bread from heaven," is with us "all days even to the consummation of the world." No wonder it was expedient "He should go away," visibly, at the Ascension; inasmuch as He was then bodily present, apparently, only to a few, who were privileged to "walk with Him"; whereas, He now dwells amongst us all, wherever the lamp of the Sanctuary

indicates the shrine of the Incarnate Word, present under the form of the manna of the New Law. A word or two, therefore, on the abiding presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament will not be out of place this morning.

I. Our Lord's actual presence in the Host, be it remembered, is not a figurative or passing visit, or a presence depending on the faith or state of mind of the receiver or worshiper; but a true, real, objective presence that remains as long as the emblems or outward forms persist. When our Lord enters the Host at the mysterious words of Consecration, He comes to stay till the appearances of bread and wine fade away into other forms. He is mystically chained to the elements, a prisoner of love in our tabernacles. "When I was in prison, you visited me," may be truly said of us who spend the "Holy Hour" clustered round the spot on earth "where His glory dwelleth." For the Eucharist is reserved, not merely to be brought to the sick and dying; but to be solemnly worshiped, either exposed, as at Exposition of Benediction; or enclosed, as in the private visits paid by the faithful at all hours. This permanent indwelling of Christ incarnate in our midst is the key of the temple of Catholicism. It is the mystic writing on the wall that explains the Mass as the sun and center of worship; because perpetuating this divine Presence amongst us till the end of time.

Mind not what people say about the superstition of the Mass; and the idol of the Host. Man is an adoring creature. He is always worshiping something present, either the true God, or the creature, in the form of self, or mammon, or the world, or the flesh. He is never done either making or breaking his gods. The very goddess of Reason is but a Minerva fashioned out of his own brain; and assuming indeed, as many shapes as the god or goddesses of the

old Roman pantheon. Man's highest concept of even the true God is but a passing image of the reality mirrored in the mind. God we must have, and that too, within reach and touch. The eucharistic God whom we adore, though, like the Cross and the Incarnation, a stumbling-block to the Jew and folly to the Gentile, yet alone realizes the heartfelt longing of all the peoples of the earth, voiced with holy pride by the prophet, "There is no other nation so great as our, so as to have their gods nigh unto them, even as our God is present with us." In the abiding presence of our Lord in the Tabernacle these words find their full realization in God's Church or nation to-day.

The Jews rightly boasted of a special visible presence of God in their midst: but He was present in their temple and sanctuaries, in signs, symbols, promises and shadows only, of "the good things to come," of which we now possess the fulness and reality. It is no longer show bread or a pot of manna, reserved in the ark and temple: but the Bread of Life; "the Body that was delivered for us, and the Blood that was shed for us." "He is our God, and we His people," not a God that lives far off, dwelling in light unapproachable, but bodily, as in Judea of old when, "He was seen on earth and conversed with men."

Comparatively speaking, it is but recently that we Catholics have wakened up into full consciousness of the treasure we possess in the abiding presence of the Incarnate Word in the Host. For ages, the great sources of bodily power and wealth and comfort, dormant in coal and gold and other metals, lay stored away in deep mines, unheeded and undreamed of. So it was with the divine Treasure of the Eucharist. It is only now in our many new and complex needs that we are beginning to realize the vast stores of spiritual wealth, power, comfort and healing locked up in the cult of our

eucharistic Lord, ever abiding in our midst. It is the warmth of divine love rather than the unyielding rigor of divine law and justice that we need most to-day. No doubt behind the law of right and wrong, traced on the heart, or trumpeted forth in Sinai, there was a loving personal God; but that availed little to make or help men to know, love and obey Him. God was forced, so to say, to show Himself, to be seen and felt, in fire and cloud and in various symbols and shadows, ending at length in His presence amongst us under the form of "the Bread of Life." If asked why He thus stays with us a prisoner of love, our sole answer is, to win our affection and thus make the practise of cold duty easy, winning and effectual. We can go to God personally, nay humanly present, without introduction or ceremony, fine clothes or state conditions, and pour out our wants and wishes, our very complaints even. How lovingly or regretfully, yet hopelessly and uselessly men linger on the dead past, or the "words" that have gone for ever, yet are blind and indifferent to the blessings and privileges of the present, and the wealth stored in "words that never pass away." People travel from all corners of the earth at endless risk, expense and self-sacrifice, to feast their eyes on the spot where Jesus was born, where He lived and worked and taught; where He was crucified, "dead and buried and lo! He is in their midst, as one whom they know not." He who graced and made sacred by His presence what we, therefore, call "The Holy Land," is in our own little church hard by as really and as truly as He was in Bethlehem, Nazareth or Jerusalem. They have gone as "ships that pass in the night," but the words of Jesus promising to "give us His body and blood and to abide with us all days even to the end of the world" have not passed away, and never will. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."

It is a privilege, no doubt, to see at Jerusalem the tomb wherein the dead Body of Him who uttered these words was laid; but a greater, if we could but see "the things that are to our peace," to feast our eyes on the new holy Sepulchre of the ciborium, wherein His living Body awaits the moment when He may come to find its resting place in our breast. Surely Abraham and Isaac and Moses longed to see the day that is ours, in the possession of the abiding presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Second Sunday of Advent

Exposition and Benediction

"Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me."—Gospel of Day.

In spite of the wondrous works of our Lord in healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers and raising the dead to life, many were shocked at and lost faith in Him. The Apostles themselves, "His own," in the most intimate sense of the term, broke and fled in the dark hour of the passion. Many who had seen Him treading on the waters, and feeding 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes, "walked no more with him," were shocked and scandalized when He said He would one day give men "His body to eat and His blood to drink." The very magnitude of His gifts, and the depth of His denying love, drew only the few, and repelled the many. "How can this man give us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink" was, and still is, the cry of those who fail to realize God's love for man as displayed in the gift of the Eucharist. How true in the modern world to-day, as in Judea of old, "There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not." The wildest dream of the occult sciences of the past, or of the spiritualism of the present, is verified in every corner of God's kingdom, our Lord daily and hourly materializing Himself at the word of His priests in holy Mass, to be our ever-present human friend and companion, nay our very food. And to-day from under the lowly veils of the Host, as of old from under "the rags of our humanity," He seems to repeat the words of our text, "Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me."

Happily, our Lord's sacramental presence has its crowd of believing and adoring witnesses. The stream of adoring prayer never ceases. To say nothing of holy Mass, there are few churches without at least a tiny group of worshipers. Whole orders of devoted men and women give up their lives to this perpetual adoration of our eucharistic God. Exposition and Benediction, formerly unknown in most places, are now almost as common as the Mass. Indeed, the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, as reserved in our tabernacles, is the feature of modern Catholic piety. This cult is the growth and outcome of the Mass, the sole form almost under which the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly worshiped for the first thousand years after its institution. The greater Elevation in the Mass even was but a protest against the errors of Berengarius, the first who denied the Real Presence. From this adoration in Mass and before holy Communion have grown the various devotions to the Blessed Sacrament now so common. The first solemn recognition of this public cult due to the Eucharist, apart from Mass and Communion, was the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264. The procession and other forms of devotion held on that day are now a world-wide act of faith, adoration and love to our eucharistic Lord. The great prayer of the Forty Hours, an expansion of shorter terms of Exposition introduced in 1534, prepared the way for the prolonged, and in many places perpetual, adoration now happily common.

There is, however, no form of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament so deservedly widespread and popular at present as Benediction; *i. e.*, the solemn blessing of the people with the Sacred Host, after a certain period of Exposition, raised aloft, in what is called a monstrance, the most recent, and perhaps the most costly and elaborate of all sacred vessels. Next to Holy Mass, Benediction is the

most attractive and best attended function of the Church. In many places it forms the core of the evening Sunday service, and has then replaced public Vespers and Compline. This touching function is the logical outcome and conclusion of procession and exposition; for what more natural than that our Lord, taken out of the Tabernacle solemnly, should bless His people ere being replaced.

When and where this holy rite of Benediction began is not very clear. It is the legitimate growth or development of the adoration of the Host always practised in some form or other before Communion. "No one," as St. Augustine says, "eats the flesh of Jesus Christ without having first adored it and far from sinning in thus adoring it, it would be a sin not to adore" (in Ps. cxviii). "Adore and Communicate," says St. Chrysostom. Thus the adoration and prostration practised in Benediction are not new; but simply the ordered outward expression of our inward love and reverence towards the divine presence in the Host. What we see glittering in the monstrance is not a wafer of bread but its semblance, under which lie veiled the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of our Christ God. As I said, Benediction is the outgrowth of the Elevation at holy Mass itself, introduced as a protest against doubt or unbelief of the Real Presence. The monstrance used in this sacred rite is but the portable pyx or tabernacle enlarged and beautified.

Furthermore, Benediction is said to have grown out of the custom of reciting in common the Litany of our Lady and other forms of devotion to her, still used during this sacred rite. From very early times it was usual to meet in the afternoon and evening to recite salutations, praises and prayers to our Lady, to which by degrees solemnity was added by exposing the Blessed Sacrament. As our Lord's presence thus became a marked feature of these gatherings in honor of our Lady, the "Tantum ergo," part of St. Thomas's

sublime eucharistic hymn, or other suitable outburst of devotion was added. It was an easy step forward to close the meeting with a solemn blessing with the Blessed Sacrament; thus giving us the rite of Benediction in almost its present form. It is now, of course, a recognized function with duly prescribed ceremonial, fixed and unalterable.

Thus the adoration of Jesus and the veneration of His holy Mother are the joint elements that go to make up this holy rite, another marked instance of devotion to our Lady entwining with the worship of her Son. We deck the altar whereon He is enthroned with lights and flowers, and sing hymns and recite prayers, not merely to Him in person, but to Her, to whom, under God, we are indebted for His sacred Body and Blood. Her heart was His first throne, her immaculate person His first tabernacle on earth; and this truth we express in the holy function of Benediction.

Lovers of Jesus and Mary then will not fail when they come to frequent this sacred service. Next to the Mass it is perhaps the public rite most helpful in the spiritual life. During the accompanying Exposition, the Sacred Host glows with dazzling radiance, symbol of the rays of the bright spiritual light, heat, force and healing that His sacred presence sheds on devout worshipers. The very atmosphere seems charged with grace.

St. Ignatius of Antioch who longed to be ground by the teeth of lions into "the bread of Christ" is said to have been one of the little children that our Lord patted and blessed. What a privilege was his! And yet at holy Benediction we can enjoy a similar favor, if we only assist devoutly and pray our Lord as He signs us with the Cross from the hands of His Minister, to bless us "ere we go," in the full divine sense of the term.

Third Sunday of Advent.

A Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

"There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you know not."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—There are many whose daily work, and often dreary duty, is a round of visits. It is an unwritten social law to call on friends. To fail to do so, when we can, is to drop out of their lives altogether. If not a true test, it is, at least, a mark of friendship we owe to those we love and admire.

Now, our best, truest, and sole unchangeable friend and lover dwells often within a stone's throw of our doors, and yet we know Him not. Our Lord and Master, Christ in the Tabernacle, "is present and calleth us," but to most of us, perhaps, His voice is that of one "crying in the wilderness."

We seem to forget, or rather ignore, the fact that Christ in the Eucharist is not merely our victim in holy Mass, our food in holy Communion, but our friend and neighbor, who lives perpetually in the church hard by, to welcome us, receive our visits, listen to our requests, sorrows, and complaints, in order to send us away refreshed, enlightened, and consoled. His home is amongst us, not in one spot only, as of old, but wherever Mass is said and the Tabernacle reared.

How impressively, is it truly said, do houses of worship witness to men's belief in God's presence and action in the world! What sermons in stone are the churches of a Catholic land! Their towers and steeples tell us to raise our hearts heavenwards, and the cross

on their summits, that our way thereto is by the Cross, "wherewith Christ redeemed the world." But their beauty is all within. The holy water at the entrance and the confessionals that line the walls tell us sinners of our duty to be clean of heart, for the spot whereon we tread is holy ground. It is no mere sight of a burning bush nor vision of a mystic ladder with "angels ascending and descending," making Jacob call the spot "the house of God and gate of heaven," but the real "Tabernacle of God with men," the true home on earth of Him, who is to each of us "the way, the truth, and the light."

For the life of God in human form, that first appeared at Bethlehem, the house of bread still abides in our churches, hidden under the form of food, and shedding that peculiar atmosphere, that special sense of divine presence, to be found nowhere else. It is only of a church, wherein the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, that God can say in all the fulness of meaning what He said of its type, the temple: "For I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there forever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually" (II. Pas. vii., 12)—words re-echoed by Christ in a new and strange sense, when He said: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world," not as a mere memory of a once living presence, nor in the sense that God is everywhere present to His creatures, but just as He was present when He uttered these words; *i. e.*, actually there as God-man—body, soul and divinity. The power you have received from me as consecrating priests, He seems to say, will cause My presence to issue forth in holy Mass, once the words of Consecration are uttered. Now, this sacramental Presence does not pass away with the Mass that brings us our Lord. It is perpetuated in the "fragments that remain," once the divine banquet of the Mass is over. The Sacred Food remains for the sick and dying, and veils our Lord as our companion and comforter.

He abides in the recesses of the Tabernacle mainly, and eventually to enter our breasts in Communion, it is true, but also to be enthroned at Benediction, and hidden away in pyx and ciborium, for public and private worship. Not only is He glorified in Mass, Communion, and Exposition, but in the silent visits paid Him by the devout. He keeps royal court in the Tabernacle, day and night, and to none does He deny access. The faithful groups, who keep watch and ward, so to say, round His tomb, find "virtue go forth from Him," as in Judea of old, and a divine force and energy, to keep them up in their daily tasks.

Members of the "Holy Hour," whose thoughts so often turn to Gethsemane, will not leave Him alone and forsaken in the lowly home, where infinite love constrains Him to dwell. He is our King and Master. Shall we fail to call round at times to pay Him our tribute of homage? He is our best friend and counsellor. Shall we, for mere courtesy sake, make daily sacrifices to call on those we neither trust, love nor esteem, and yet pass His door without stepping in to say an Our Father or a Gloria. We find plenty of time for rounds of hurtful pleasure, of business, long-protracted meals, for idle reading or gossip, but the invitation to a brief call on Him, who shed the last drop of His Blood for our sakes, and who loves us to self-annihilation in the Blessed Sacrament, meets with endless excuses. Is this attitude worthy of loving, or even believing, souls?

Who does not profess a longing to see the land, hallowed by Christ's life, passion and death? What sacrifices people make to visit Bethlehem, where He was born; Nazareth, where he grew up, "in grace and wisdom before God and men"; Jerusalem, where He was crucified; and lo! He is with us in our own Church, as really and truly as in the Holy Land. "There hath stood One in the midst of you whom you know not." A voice from the Tabernacle seems

to say to each one of us, as to the Apostle: "Philip, so long a time I have been with you; and you have not known me."

He tells us to "watch and pray." How or where can we better fulfil this duty than by an occasional visit to His sacramental home, where we will find Him in person, God and Man. We need no fine clothes nor letter of introduction, no herald, to announce our coming; no eloquent lips to voice our needs. He invites us to come, just as we are. The child may call on its way to school, the toiler on his way to work, the merchant on his way to office or mart. Old and young, the fervent and the tepid, saint and sinner, ever find a ready welcome, and never leave with empty hands. Where the Host is, there is Christ; and where Christ is, "grace abounds." By the very indulgences we gain in presence of the Blessed Sacrament—300 days each time we devoutly say five Paters, Aves, and Glorias, and an additional Pater, Ave, and Gloria for the intentions of Holy Church—we lay up treasures in heaven's bank.

Be not then of those who put all social duties and calls before those we owe to Christ, our God, our Redeemer, our Brother in Flesh, our dearest, truest, and staunchest friend in life and death, in time and for eternity. When the key is turned in the Tabernacle and our Lord locked away after Sunday or week-day Mass, let us not be of those to whom He seems to say in reproach: "I was in prison and you visited me not."

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Holy Viaticum.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."—Gospel of Day.

Introduction.—A well-ordered life, as I said, is a life-long preparation for our Lord's coming, either in holy Communion here or in judgment hereafter. He meets us now, as a brother, in humility, peace, and love; but when death seals our fate, we have to face Him as the just, stern, impartial judge of the quick and the dead. Advent brings us this double message, opening with the vivid description of "The Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty," and closing with the angels' glad message at Christmas, bringing us "Good tidings of great joy," "For this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord." The Divine Babe of Bethlehem is born in our hearts every time we receive Communion, bearing a message of peace, sweetness, and love; but a day will come, when we shall thus receive Him for the last time, and the administering priest will offer us the Body and Blood of Christ as our Viaticum, to guard us from our deadly spiritual foes and lead us safely across the dark river of death to the realms of everlasting life. Tender, touching, and impressive are the memories clinging round our First Communion, when we receive our Lord in unsullied baptismal robes and clasp Him to our breasts in all the fervor, grace and innocence of childhood; but far more impressive, because immeasurably more important and far-reaching in its consequences, is our last. He comes to us, no doubt, as a loving friend and companion, at the last stage in life's journey, but, at the same time, a fateful messenger of

judgment to come, telling us to put our accounts in order, for now we can be God's stewards no longer, and He, the Lamb of God, no longer our friend and advocate with the Father, but our just, unbending, and unrelenting judge.

I. Life is a perilous journey, in which "it is not good for man to be alone." Solitude were unbearable, even to the saints, unless buoyed up by the sense of God's presence and fellowship. And yet, even hermits live and work together. The most daring and intrepid explorer would not venture into earth's deepest solitudes without guides and helpers. The Church is a Society, binding us all together in holy companionship. Our Lord in holy Communion, and in the Tabernacle, is our lifelong friend and associate, and makes His Body and Blood the very cement joining us to Him, and to one another. We are his flock. He shepherds us through Peter and his brethren, and follows us in the Eucharist, personally, wholly, and invisibly, to the remotest bounds of His vast, world-wide sheepfold. For the way of life is beset with perils and pitfalls, and we beg our Lord to "tarry with us because it is towards evening" (Luke xxiv, 29). And he does so, even to the dark night of death. He comes to us as our Viaticum—our food and our staff on a still more fateful and perilous journey than that of life, for is He not "the Bread of Eternal Life," the pledge and seed of immortality?

Death is not so much the term and close of life as the entry and starting-point of a new one. And Christ, in the Eucharist, would Himself be our Raphael on the way hereto.

The journey then begun leads to an abode, not through trackless space or endless time, but one wherein life is measured, neither by space nor time, but by eternity. Who would venture alone, unaided, and unguided, to a distant planet or outer star? But what is this in comparison with the soul's journey to eternity? And hence, not

only do we live Christ by frequent and daily Communion, but we die Him therein by our last fervent Viaticum.

Faith reels at times. The whole colossal fabric of religion appears to totter. What we grasp by sense alone seems real, whilst the unseen, the realm of the supernatural, strike us as hollow, shadowy, spectral, unreal—the mere stuff that dreams are made of. But God comes to our aid, in revealing Himself visibly and tangibly in holy Communion. We recognize Him, feel the reality of another world, in "the breaking of bread," the very fuel of our supernatural life. Never is this experience more deeply realized than when the world of sense is fading away and the shadows of the world beyond are breaking in upon the soul. What a comfort to feel that we have our Lord with us in life and in death—our Alpha and Omega—the light of life, both here and beyond, brought to us, not in mere vague words and promises, but in the felt reality of the Sacred Host!

Viaticum is a Latin word, meaning provision for a journey. It were rashness for soldiers, travelers, and explorers to start without provision. Now, such we are, each and all, in regard to the other life; and it is, therefore, our bounden duty to make due provision for our jorney to eternity by receiving holy Viaticum in danger of death from illness. The Church even dispenses from the law of fasting before Communion, lest her children should lose this last great aid to a holy death.

People whose very name, language, and religion have long since perished used to provide their dead with food and drink. The contents of their tombs, still surviving, bear silent witness to their belief, even though gross and coarse, in life beyond the grave, and the need of making provision for it in this life. They, too, had their viaticum.

Their care in this respect should impress upon us the duty we are under to see that our dying, helpless friends should not leave this world without the last rites. Doctors should be encouraged to advise as to the risk of coming death, and the priest sent for in time, ere body and mind are unfit to receive and welcome our Lord for the last time in holy Communion. Everything should be removed from sight and mind that might hinder the sick from benefiting to the full by Christ's last visit in His sacramental state. The very room, as far as possible, should be made to look like a chapel, to fit it for the divine Presence. A crucifix, blessed lights, and clean linen cloth should make the Communion table an altar. A glass of water and spoon, towel, and basin should be provided for the priest who administers the last rites. No better work of mercy than to aid the helpless sick, either by reading or word of mouth, to make their last Communion their best. What more solemn moment or greater need for the soul, than when trembling on the brink of eternity, when each tick of the clock may mark its last on earth, before appearing at the bar of divine justice! Man is not like the "flower of the field that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven." Consciousness does not cease with the passing, called death. What greater deed of charity, nay, of duty, therefore, than to aid poor souls, who, during life, have seen God dimly and in a dark, veiled manner in creation, in the Incarnation, and in the Blessed Sacrament, to get ready to behold Him in heaven, "face to face." Let us ever strive to fulfil towards others this great spiritual work of mercy, so that when our own turn comes we, too, may deserve to secure our Lord's bodily presence, not only in life, but at death.

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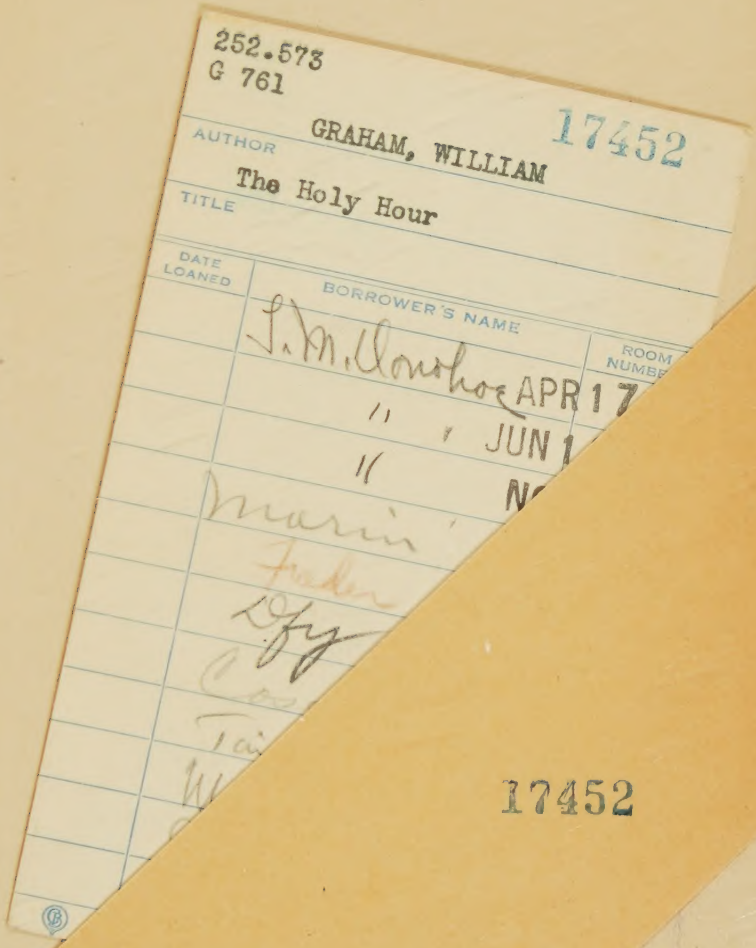

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